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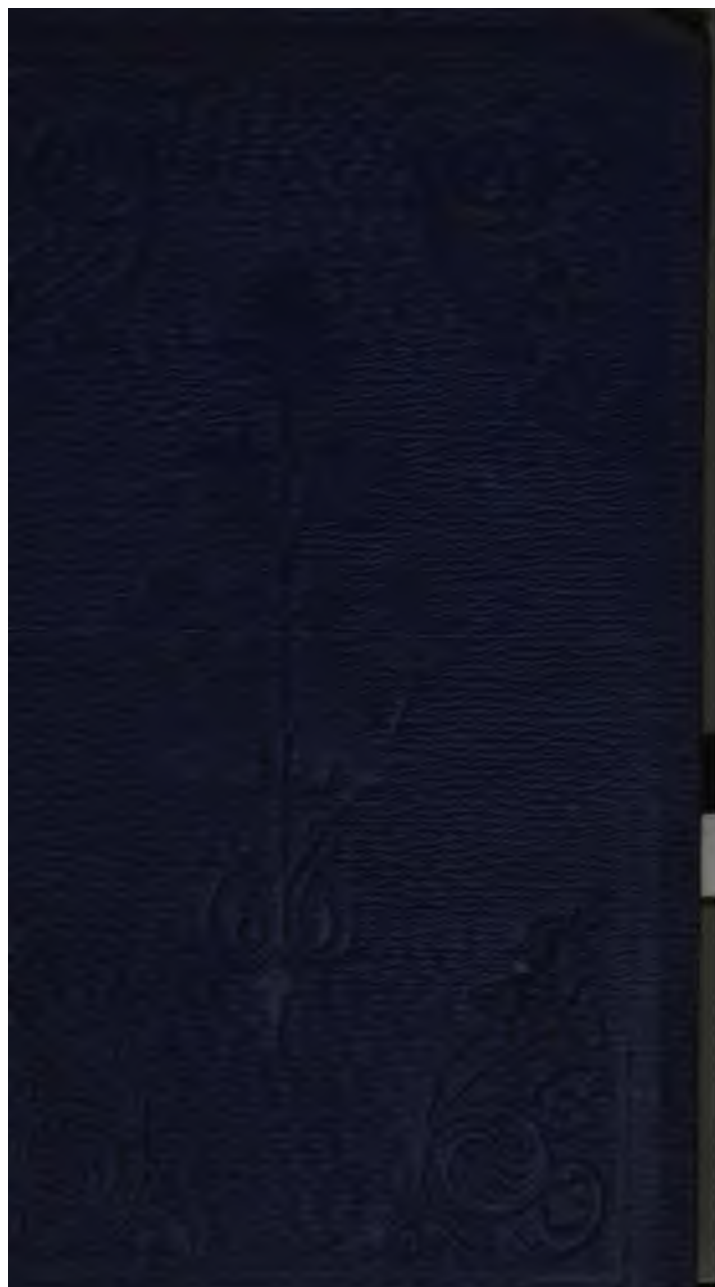
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VIOLETS AND JONQUILS.



IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I



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CONTENTS

OF THE

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	PAGE
CHAPTER I. A Faithful Friend is the Best Antidote to Despondency	1
CHAPTER II. Plutarch's Conception of "Parallel Lives" is Disapproved at St. Barnabas	13
CHAPTER III. "Cerberus" on the Probable Starters for the Senior Wranglership	20
CHAPTER IV. Darcy Grants "Letters of Marque" against Yellow-land	24
CHAPTER V. Fortescue puts his Leg into his Own Man- trap	29
CHAPTER VI. A Love Letter not meant to be "Private and Confidential"	43
CHAPTER VII. Darcy Worships Britannia through the Medium of an Idol	53
CHAPTER VIII. Florence Mistakes Cupid for Another Person	57
CHAPTER IX. "England Expects Every Man will do his Duty"	70

	PAGE
CHAPTER X. The Skeleton of the Feast	79
CHAPTER XI. The Violet declares War upon the Jonquil	93
CHAPTER XII. Old Friends, but New Foes	103
CHAPTER XIII. Darcy receives the Ambassadors of a Hostile Tribe	120
CHAPTER XIV. The Moth still flutters round the Candle .	135
CHAPTER XV. He who Cherishes a Viper, must Beware of its Fangs	149
CHAPTER XVI. Any Wood is Good Enough for an Idol in Yellow land	170
CHAPTER XVII. Fortune has Strange Ways of Showing her Favour	191
CHAPTER XVIII. The Privateer sails for Yellow land under False Colours	203
CHAPTER XIX. The Thunder-cloud shows its Silver Lining	216
CHAPTER XX. Heart Speaks to Heart	229
CHAPTER XXI. The British Oak proves sound at the Core	237
CHAPTER XXII. "Under which King, Bezonian?" .	243
CHAPTER XXIII. A Sudden Blow Decapitates the Jon- quil	259
CHAPTER XXIV. "When Greek meets Greek, then comes the Tug of War"	265
CHAPTER XXV. The Fox is mistaken for a "Dull Dog"	278
CHAPTER XXVI. The Privateer hoists the Blue Flag and Fires her Broadside	294
CHAPTER XXVII. The Mouse puts its Shoulder sturdily to the Wheel, and Moves the Waggon	303

VIOLETS AND JONQUILS.

CHAPTER I.

A FAITHFUL FRIEND IS THE BEST ANTIDOTE TO DESPONDENCY.

IT was a desolate evening in the first week of January, and the rain beat heavily against the gray old walls of one of the smaller colleges of Cambridge, which we will call at present by the *nom de guerre* of St. Barnabas, when a student was sitting in his solitary rooms, surrounded by books and papers, but for the time being apparently quite unoccupied either by them or by thoughts directly connected with them. He was contemplating with great attention two or three rough sketches in pencil, executed with a wonderful aptitude for delineation of character and fitness of grouping, but hastily and without finish, bearing, moreover, the marks of early talent unripe even to childhood, rather than the evidences of educated art. They were more like what one might have fancied the first attempts of Quinten Matsys, when his artist soul burst forth from him almost without his own knowledge, than the highly finished, spiritless performances of the modern school; and while they evinced beyond all doubt the most brilliant powers of creation, it was not difficult to discover that the natural gifts of their author had received but little culture from a professional teacher.

But whatever may have been their merits, the student

VOL. I. B

regarded them with the deepest attention, and with emotions of widely varying kinds alternately flitting across his features, sometimes of pride amounting almost to triumph, sometimes of sorrow and a kind of fear, as though the associations connected with them partook of apprehension of coming evil.

"I don't half like the idea of it," muttered he, "yet what can I say? Independence is, after all, the natural desire of all minds good for anything. And it is better than teaching stupid children, and toadying to vulgar, arrogant mammas. Besides which, there is plenty of time yet to do something, if these detestable books would but repay the devotion which I have bestowed on them. A very decided case of loving your enemies though, if they did," murmured he, in conclusion, with a merry smile, which plainly showed what a light heart naturally beat in that toil-worn frame; "for heaven knows I hate them most devoutly all the time that I so diligently court them, and should be delighted to show my ingratitude, by ruthlessly burning the tools by which I have carved out my fortunes. O King of Macedon! thou who didst present a bushel of peas, as the meet guerdon of his skill, to the clever performer who shot them through an incredibly small hole, what would you have given, I wonder, to the man who devotes his health of body and mind to the acquirement of all this mass of mathematical rubbish? Not a provision for life, I suspect, or a passport as what is called a distinguished young man into any sphere of action which one may select for a calling."

With these words he reseated himself in his reading chair, and attempted to compose himself to the perusal of one of the obnoxious books, when the sound of wheels rapidly clattering up to the gate, and a tremendous peal at the porter's bell, caused him suddenly

to start up, as though he fancied that he recognised some unexpected friend in the new arrival. He rushed to the window, and began to unbolt the shutter, to see if his suspicions were correct, but before he had completed a task rendered by no means the easier by the bent and battered condition of the bar, a quick step was heard on the stairs, and the door, flung violently open by an impetuous hand, admitted a visitor whose want of ceremony appeared to convey a perfect consciousness of being thoroughly welcome.

And certainly, if nature ever does write upon the faces of her children letters of recommendation so satisfactory that they invariably produce the desired effect, she had furnished Philip Darcy with the assurance of a hearty greeting wherever he went, for a more prepossessing countenance one may seldom see. Not that he was by any means strikingly handsome, since he had not about him a single marked feature or particular point to attract more than usual attention, but that he was so remarkably "good looking;" why, you hardly knew, but the fact itself was beyond all doubt, so that after agreeing in detail, that his rich brown hair was not positively unrivalled, nor his eyes the handsomest that had ever been seen, nor his nose perfectly Grecian, nor his mouth beyond all praise, the ladies in every ball-room generally came to the conclusion that he was the nicest-looking man there, and the best dressed too, partially, perhaps, owing to the same absence of any predominating feature in his toilette.

As for his disposition, we shall have abundance of opportunities to judge of that as our history progresses, but I think I may venture to say, that Dame Nature did not practise any very cruel deception on those to whom she sent him with a character in her handwriting, and that there was less danger in trust-

ing to appearances with him, than is proverbially the case as a general rule.

"Why, Phil!" exclaimed the student, almost incredulously, "can it really be you? what can have brought you up just now to this dull place, exactly in the very gayest season at Monkworth, and capital hunting-weather too? It must be your ghost, I think."

"Certainly not, Charlie!" responded Darcy, seating himself upon the table, and proceeding to extricate himself from his various fences against the weather, "for these very manifest reasons. First, that ghosts are famous for asking questions without taking the trouble of waiting for an answer, whereas I have come expressly to obtain a reply from you about something which was told me last night. Secondly, ghosts seldom eat or drink, wherein I shall speedily most parlously differ from them, unless old Potts prove obdurate to the embassy I sent to the kitchen through the porter. And thirdly, ghosts are usually misguided enough to thrust their acquaintance upon people to whom their presence is unwelcome or useless, whereas I am sure that I am not the one, and I hope to prove not exactly the other. Added to which, unless my knowledge of ghosts deceives me....." Here he was interrupted by the entrance of a gyp with supper, to which he forthwith proceeded to apply himself with a zest which savoured very little of a land of shadows.

"Charlie," said he, at length, after sundry good humoured maledictions on the stony-hearted farmers, who kept poultry to extreme old age for no other apparent object than to supply undergraduates with uneatable food, "do you know that I fell in love last night, and that hallucination has sent me here."

"The deuce it has!" replied his companion; "that you should have been flirting is not very strange, that

you should have established a fresh idol is no very rare occurrence; but that she should have sent you here is both rare and strange. But who is the fair lady, and what connexion have I with her?"

"Simply, my dear fellow, that she happens to be your sister; and that at a Twelfth-night party, to which I was entrapped last night by Leila Mainwaring, 'I suddenly discovered,' to quote Bon Gualtier, 'that my heart was not my own.' Hence my ghostly visit, and my very unghostly desire to have a question fairly answered. Are you soberly and rationally purposed to allow that poor child to become an artist? or, to speak more correctly, are you, despite your university renown, such a particularly execrable ass as to have the said intention?"

"And pray, my dear Phil," returned the student, who appeared perfectly used to his friend's unvarnished language, "did you come upwards of a hundred miles to put that question by word of mouth, instead of by letter? because if you did, and for the same reason as that which induced you to go to Monkworth last summer, viz., to make sure of putting the matter as delicately as possible, since, as you then remarked, there is little danger of telling a man to his face all that you might be irritated into writing, I think you have rather failed for once."

"No, I did not come precisely for that, since I have another little commission from the fair enslaver of my heart, who certainly, considering her tender age, promises to be a genuine tyrant when her thirteen years have ripened into all the ferocity of the full-grown heart-breaker. And that commission is no less responsible an office than to cheer your loneliness during that abominable examination week, and to see that you do not commit suicide, or any other eccentricity of the

kind, of which the gentle Marion seems to entertain no little apprehension."

"All this is heathen Greek to me," answered Charles Burton, "inasmuch as I did not know you had ever seen my sister, nor do I know now in what way you happened to meet."

"Because you won't wait to hear," returned Phil. "If you would have only exercised a little more patience, I should have commenced with 'first causes' in a style which would have rejoiced the inmost souls of those musty old philosophers, who used to spend their lives in dawdling about Athens, splitting straws, and wrangling over the most contemptibly petty differences under the monstrous self-deception that they were thereby laying the foundation of a sound canon of morality and virtue. And thence I should have proceeded step by step with that perspicuity which characterizes all my arguments, until you were in full possession of the whole facts. But as you must needs have my story told after your own fashion, know, most noble Charlie, that Sir Magnus Oliphant has given up paying any more interest to the Jews upon his mortgages, which would be very wise of him if he had any choice in the matter; but as matters stand, the fruits of his prudence are not quite so manifest, since they are foreclosing, and in plain words selling him up. Wherefore down went I to look at the property; went to a child's party in obedience to the commands of Miss Leila aforesaid; fell desperately in love with your sister; expressed my willingness to undertake a pilgrimage to Jericho to fetch her some almonds fit to eat, or to Thibet in search of a real unicorn, whichever she chose; but was commissioned instead, with pretty earnestness, to go and see that poor old Charlie was not low spirited during a time when he wanted a kind friend near him. So here I am."

"So you have seen little Marion, have you? and what do you think of her? Now, don't talk nonsense, and joke about falling in love with her, for I really am very anxious for her welfare. But what is your real opinion?"

"Honestly and frankly, that she is a remarkably engaging child, and none the less so for not being a little premature woman, instead of what nature meant her to be—simple, and honest, and innocent, with some of the dews of Eden over her still. And now to my question: can you gravely mean to make an artist of her, and soil that fine nature with all the mercenary details of studying how to make money out of her wonderful natural gifts for drawing, unless, indeed, you wish to make her a more mournful if more honourable character, a victim to her pure conceptions and lofty artist-soul, being too little subservient to the taste of patrons to win gold, though she may, perhaps, achieve posthumous fame?"

"All that may be very true," replied his friend, gloomily; "but what am I to do? Surely you will hardly recommend the plan of bringing her up as a governess instead. Indeed, if you do, pardon me if I say plainly that it is an advice that will not be taken—and if neither of these openings are made use of, to what have we to look, except the uncertain prospect of my own success in life, and even that dependant either on the length of the said life, or a miserable insurance, for a heavy one would be at first impossible. Let her learn to be independent and self-reliant, and even if she have some struggles, let the fine nature, in attributing which to her I believe you only do her justice, support her in itself. Surely, if her love for the beautiful be such a leading characteristic in her as we all hope, it must be some comfort to the votary of art, and must atone for the absence of much

which, to the common mind, may appear almost necessary."

"But could not the friendship of my mother be made of avail in any way, even though you remain as obstinate as ever—and a mule is quite tractable to you in that respect—as regards more direct assistance from my preposterous superfluities?"

The student shook his head. "No! it is not from pride alone that I decline this, but deep conviction that danger of no ordinary kind haunts the lives of all persons in equivocal and unnatural positions, and that the lofty nature of which you spoke just now may then become a snare and no protection. It cannot be!"

"Well, upon my soul!" said Darcy, laughing, "I never should have dreamed of calling loftiness of soul an extra cause of fear lest a person might go wrong; but I dare say you may have come to a right conclusion here, by some of the queer kinds of reckoning whereby you mathematicians attain to the arcana of your science."

"Then, my dear Phil, your own experience, to say nothing of that of those whom you have known, has profited you very little. But, pardon me, I did not mean to wound you," said he, earnestly, as an expression of great pain passed over the features of his companion, who writhed under some disagreeable reminiscence called up by his words. "I was wrong to speak thus; but you are the last man I should have expected to be ignorant of a fact, none the less true for being very lamentable."

"Tell me, Charlie," interrupted his friend, almost fiercely, and not heeding his apology, "is shame or dishonour the honest meed of those who have seen danger face to face, known all its force, and yet withstood it? In the memory you recall there is no

shame; in the most solemn sense of the words, I repeat, before God, I lie not!"

"Nay! I never thought there was, or hinted that there was. I felt, and feel now convinced, that your nature, good and noble in all its recklessness, could never have fallen as low as that; yet I cannot blame myself if I am not desirous to see the battle out of which you have come, honourably indeed, but, despite all your merriment, somewhat shattered in solid happiness, waged at all by one in whom I take so deep an interest; and I again repeat, that in the very sympathy that the better minds feel with what is more refined, and somewhat above their worldly condition, there is a danger, to which, with my consent, Marion shall never be subjected."

Darcy made no reply, but strode up and down the room for some minutes with hurried steps, and then dismissing the question altogether, as was not uncommon with him, instead of entering into farther argument, turned the conversation into a perfectly different channel. "By the by, what did Dr. Hepburn say about your state of health, and your fitness to undergo the excitement of an examination? for I understood that he was rather alarmed lest you should fail in the trial itself; some nervousness about which, combined with an idea that a friend to cheer you might keep you up to the mark, formed, indeed, my principal object in coming here; for your friends appear to have more apprehension of your spirits failing you, than even your physical strength, and certainly much more than of your pretensions to a high place not quite answering their expectations."

"Oh, he talked as doctors generally do talk, about the necessity of keeping myself quiet, and not being excited, and so on; but how to guard myself from the excitement he did not explain quite as satisfactorily."

However, on the whole, he gave me pretty fair hopes, and I must nerve myself up for the struggle as best I may."

"Well, I think myself that the plan I have come up to induce you to adopt is by very far the best, and I have taken good advice upon it, too. The day after to-morrow you will go in for the first time; now give up all idea of cramming any more, stand upon what you know already; freshen up your memory a little if you choose, on any minor details that may seem likely to repay the trouble of an hour's reading, but as for the rest, give your body and your nerves fair play, and I feel convinced you will do well. Even if you do run some risk of losing a couple of places or so, is not that better, if it ensure practical success, than risking your all on one cast? As fifth, or sixth, or even tenth wrangler, you will be as sure of your fellowship in a small college, like ours, as you would be if second, not to say first; and when you consider how much depends upon the certainty of obtaining a provision for life, I think it is your duty to prefer security to the chances of a struggle, which, if not eminently successful, must then prove as singularly disastrous. I brought both 'the fairies' up with me, and every day you shall have a good gallop on Queen Mab, who is a wise and discreet beast, as befits her experience, and thinking as little as possible of this disagreeable trial, we will imitate the good example of Count Devereux and the delicate Tarleton, in 'talking easily and sillily about the things of the day.'"

"I believe you are right, Phil," said the student, cheerfully, "and I honestly think the sight of your kind, merry face, and the knowledge that every day as I come out of the Senate house, I shall meet a friend who really does care if I have been doing well or not, will do me more good than all the medicine

which could be poured down my abhorrent throat, and fully restore the nerves and presence of mind I so grievously wanted before you came up; not that I shall so entirely relax my reading as you recommend, for there are many little things over which I must cast an eye at the very last, but I will have no more midnight fagging, at any rate; and, moreover, I will join you with pleasure in your ride every day, although I must protest against such a libel upon my equestrian skill, as the recommending me a quiet horse of staid and formal habits."

"It is curious," said Darcy, laughing, "how invariably every man is scandalized at the charge of not riding well. Spare that one jest, and you may attack anything else with impunity; but a slur on his seat on horseback is more than he can bear. But I assure you I meant no insult to your centaurship, and have no doubt that you are, for the time being, an inseparable portion of your steed; yet, permit me to remark, that if the whole monster rolled on the ground together, Chiron himself could hardly have helped some chance of the equine portion of his double identity injuring the human, or, to drop all metaphor, if Oberon chanced to throw himself down, and perform a kind of cartwheel with you, it would be impossible to insure your perfect freedom from some damage; and as your horse will have to carry 'Cæsar and his fortunes,' to a very serious extent, I certainly shall not risk your fellowship upon the good behaviour of the king of fairyland. But I must not keep you up any longer, for although time may be made for slaves, we are not exactly free, but in hard training; so off to bed directly, and I shall expect you to breakfast to-morrow at half-past eight, when I have a little piece of personal gossip about myself to tell you, which I think will amuse you, as much as your sober and

philosophical mind would condescend to allow to be the case, even though, like Brothers, the prophet, you saw his Satanic majesty strolling leisurely into London. Good night!" and humming a most singular medley of heterogeneous songs, Philip Darcy bounded down-stairs at his usual rattling pace, and into the porter's lodge, in which sanctum we will for the present leave him.

CHAPTER II.

PLUTARCH'S CONCEPTION OF "PARALLEL LIVES" IS
DISAPPROVED AT ST. BARNABAS.

CHARLES BURTON was the only son of an easy, careless, good natured country gentleman, who made up so abundantly for his absence of enmity towards his fellow-creatures by a most determined hostility to himself, that he must be allowed to have possessed on the whole a quite average share of the distinctive and malicious propensities of our frail human nature. No avenger of blood, bound by a Corsican Vendetta to the most unrelenting malignity towards the accursed family, could have worked to achieve its ruin more systematically, unceasingly, and successfully, than did William Burton to rob himself and his family of a home or a subsistence; and at the time of his death it was no fault of his that he had not triumphantly attained his object, but simply the consequence of the prudence of his father-in-law, who had secured the little fortune of his only daughter by a strict settlement upon herself. Left with two children, the eldest a boy of sixteen, brought up by his careless father with no definite prospects in life, and better known for his proficiency in field sports than for love of study, scarce a ray of hope illumined the dismal future of the poor widow; but she was destined, nevertheless, to reap some of the benefits of her careful and high-principled training of her children, and to learn by happy experience how great is the influence of an honoured mother over a nature more impressible by the dictates of duty and affection, than by either ambition or the love of science.

The boy, who had previously laughed at the petty inducements of prizes and school honours, who evinced no kind of emulation or wish to surpass his fellows, and bore with the utmost stoicism all the indirect shafts of satire levelled at his backwardness in his studies, suddenly became at the death of his father, and after a visit to the rectory, from which he returned with traces of tears on his cheeks, but a new fire in his eye, a very prodigy of unceasing labour, made months apparently do the work of years in his advancement, and, to the amazement of all who knew him, stood before he was nineteen at the head of that very school, in which three years before he had been the overgrown dunce.

At this time a scholarship became vacant at St. Barnabas, for which he sent in his name as a candidate, and with a beating heart set off for Cambridge to draw his first chance in the lottery of life.

Although the competitors were somewhat numerous, he found none of them likely to give him much trouble, except a young man fresh from Eton, to whom success seemed almost as much a matter of life and death as to himself, inasmuch as he had great expectations from a crusty old Indian uncle, who had so set his heart on his nephew obtaining this scholarship, as an evidence that he was fit for the public life to which he destined him, as to render it a fair matter of doubt, whether in his struggle for academic fame Philip Darcy was not at the same time competing for a rich inheritance.

Time after time, for four successive days, the two competitors sate opposite to each other, furtively eying their mutual progress with all the interest of generous rivalry, acknowledging each other at meeting by a few friendly words of incipient good will, but at present *showing no inclination towards farther acquaintance.*

On the fifth morning, the over-excited nerves of Charles Burton failed him so completely that the pen fell from his trembling fingers, and bending his head down upon his hands in almost fainting despair, he gave himself up for awhile as lost. When at last he betook himself again to his papers, he observed with some surprise that his rival opposite had also ceased writing, and was busily engaged in scratching a burlesque head on the table with his penknife. "Are you ready? away with you!" said the stranger, merrily, and waiting with a courtesy worthy of the French Guard under the *ancien régime* for his fellow-competitor to begin first, he dashed away again into the questions before him.

As Burton was coming out from the examination, and was betaking himself to the rooms allotted to his temporary use, he was roused from a desponding reverie by a light tap on his shoulder, and turning round, beheld his generous rival with an air of sincere sympathy strongly depicted upon his prepossessing features.

"I beg your pardon for stopping you," said he, with a courtesy somewhat uncommon in so young a man, "but I think you were ill this morning, or perhaps a little nervous. Now, what I want to say is this: when you wish to have a rest, just call out for a suspension of arms, and we will both leave off for awhile; we are quite clear of the others, I am sure, so we have all the battle to ourselves."

"A chivalrous kind of warfare indeed," answered Charles, admiringly, "but a very unusual one. It was very kind of you to stop this morning, but I cannot allow this any more, and if you persevere in doing so, you will really drive me into withdrawing my name altogether; for I understand that you also have too important a stake in the result, to make your generous offer one which I can possibly accept."

"Well!" said Darcy, "if it be so, I must give way I suppose; so to-morrow, come what will, I shall write as though for bare life." With these words he left him, and walked away, muttering to himself—"It's as bad as shooting a hen partridge on her nest. I can't do it! I can't indeed! but how the deuce am I to manage it? Eureka!" said he, cheerfully, "that will, I hope, contrive to meet both objects."

On the sixth and last day, a paper of historical questions was placed before the candidates, apparently cutting off the last chance that remained for poor Charles, as his boyish idleness had left him more deficient there than in any other subject, and of Philip Darcy he had already learned, that this was his strongest point; one indeed in which very few scholars of any age could successfully compete with him. The fatal paper swum before his eyes, and the wreck of his fortunes filled his heart, almost to the exclusion of the necessity for present exertion; but mechanically nerving himself to his task he continued to answer as well as his late-acquired knowledge would admit, but with hope and courage sinking every moment, as the furious pace of Darcy's pen showed him but too plainly that the struggle was now being carried on without favour, and that the preponderance of historical knowledge was hopelessly upon his rival's side. And, strange to say, the generous competitor of yesterday seemed turned into the almost malignantly triumphant victor of to-day; for a smile of spiteful amusement (as he then read it) played over Darcy's face, as he rapidly filled sheet after sheet with an ease that evinced how thoroughly at home he was in his present task; and when the unfortunate student heard him mutter—"That will do it, I think," even his disgust at such cruel joy was lost in sheer amazement, and his sense of defeat, painful as it was,

could not quite suffice to prevent his thoughts from wandering to this inexplicable piece of inconsistency, and useless hypocrisy of good-will.

Sick at heart, he returned to his rooms, and began a letter to his mother, to break to her as gently as possible the sad intelligence of his failure, and consequent blight of his hopes of a scholastic career; but hardly had he commenced his dreary task when the door opened hastily, and Darcy came quickly in, extending his hand in a most friendly manner, and greeting him in the following unexpected terms—

“Allow me to congratulate you upon your success! for I have just come from an interview with one of the examiners, which puts your election beyond all reasonable doubt. Mr. McKenzie has announced to me his conviction that my impertinence deserves expulsion from the University before I even belong to it, and showed me the fragments of my history paper upon the floor, where he had thrown them in a passion which would have been quite perfect, had it been accompanied with the one accessory of having first torn them with his teeth. You never saw such a tempest of wrath in your life.”

“But what was the cause of his wrath?” said Charles, wonderingly.

“Simply this—I carried out a favourite doctrine of my uncle’s, that the great use of history is to instruct us in the affairs of modern policy, to the extent of drawing sundry most libellous comparisons between some of the greatest villains of Grecian and Roman history, and the very politicians by toadying to whom the reverend examiner trusts to become a Dean, or even a Bishop, before he dies; and as my language, in some cases, was more remarkable for its pure Saxon vigour, than its overstrained classicality and politeness, and the jokes were of a somewhat undignified nature for such worshipful eyes to encounter, he has

sworn by the Nine Gods, that I shall be no scholar of St. Barnabas ! ergo, you will, comparatively speaking, walk over the course, for I am quite certain that there was no one else near us two."

"But have you not ruined yourself by this mad prank, the generous motives for which, however, I can easily decipher? for unless I am much misinformed, your uncle has made success in this scholarship an almost indispensable requisite for his continued favour."

"Oh, I have no dread on that score," said his new friend, laughing; "my uncle will be very savage at first, but his inveterate hatred of the ministerial party is such, and his love of the ludicrous so innate in him, that long before to-morrow night he will have quite forgiven me, so that I can safely congratulate you, without any fear of the consequences to myself."

Nor did his confidence in his uncle's political bias deceive him, for not only did he make his peace the very next day, but was quoted during the rest of the old Indian's life as a miracle of wit, humour, and early talent for a public career, and was mentioned in his will under the complimentary designation of "my dear nephew, Philip Darcy, in whose sound constitutional principles and great talents I repose such confidence, as to hail in him the future founder of new honours in our ancient house." This eulogium was followed up by the bequest of two handsome estates in land, a sum of money which would not be considered a mere bagatelle, even as a balance at Coutts's, and India stock besides, of sufficient value to ornament Philip with one or two stars, of more appreciable value than those which form the brightest day-dreams of the scheming politicians, amongst whom his uncle had in anticipation promised him so distinguished a place.

I must not omit to add, that the circumstances attending his trial for the scholarship delayed his entrance at St. Barnabas for upwards of a year, so

that at the time of which I now speak, he was a full year junior to Burton in standing, despite of their having once been not only cotemporaries, but rivals.

Meanwhile, Charles had pursued his studies with all the vigorous perseverance which had characterized his adoption of a new mode of life, and had succeeded in supporting himself upon his scholarships and exhibitions, without trespassing upon the resources of his adored mother after the first year, and was now considered certain of a place amongst the first five wranglers, although his exact position was not as clearly marked out as is usually the case in the average run of years.

Of Darcy he had seen a great deal during term-time, but in vacations nothing, except in one flying visit to the metropolis, of which we shall hear more as our history progresses ; and the friendship between the hard-working scholar and the brilliant young man of wealth and pleasure, had hitherto been confined almost entirely to walks or rides, during the mid-day rest, which Charles grudgingly allowed himself, as a necessary concession to the demands of exhausted nature, and the confidential conversations in which two men, so young, and so mutually esteeming one another, might reasonably be expected to indulge.

With this short explanation of the relative position of our young students, and presuming that the subsequent events of this narrative will sufficiently explain themselves as they appear, I will leave Charles for the present, as with marvellously lightened spirits he betakes himself to rest, and will follow Philip Darcy into the porter's lodge, where we may perhaps discover a little more of the circumstances connected with the coming examinations, fraught with such fearful interest to our stout-hearted friend.

CHAPTER III.

"CERBERUS" ON THE PROBABLE STARTERS FOR THE SENIOR
WRANGLERSHIP.

THE porter of St. Barnabas sat in his large easy-chair, by the side of a roaring fire, with his pipe in his mouth, and a tumbler of strong punch steaming at his elbow, a very picture of contented comfort, and pompous consciousness that he was a person of no small consequence within the college walls. Fat, good-humoured, and opinionated, no mean or envious spy over his young inmates, but inflexibly honest in the discharge of his duties, he was as fair a specimen of the college janitor as you could find throughout the University. And, reverentially be it spoken, the porter is, in many ways, no bad sample by which to judge of the general spirit of the fellows themselves: a jolly, good-tempered, burly Cerberus, like our present friend, usually betokening a genial, kind-hearted body of Dons, ruling prudently by that sober and friendly advice which never fails to win respect and obedience from any young person of average good feeling or gentleman-like demeanour; while a lean, hungry-looking, prying porter, who seems as if fresh from a spunging-house, is the almost hopeless sign of an equally mean system of espionage in the powers that be. Therefore, O, fathers! coming up to Cambridge to enter your son in person—an extremely bad habit, by the way—demand to see the porter ere the poor boy's doom be fixed; and if that official be fat and well-liking, and the tutor can look you in the face.

without smirking, or bearing the aspect of a pick-pocket masquerading as a foreign professor, down with his name instantly, and thank your stars that your hopeful progeny is pretty sure to be brought up as a man of honour and a gentleman, even if he never becomes a Porson or an Adams. But to return to our tale.

The porter of St. Barnabas was in his glory, for he had all means and appliances to boot to make himself comfortable, and, moreover, he was acting as an oracle and prophet of the coming examination, on which subject he flattered himself that he was a very knowing personage, having collected all the rumours which were afloat concerning the different aspirants for university honours, with the diligence of a turfite picking his favourite horse for the Derby, and having learnedly weighed their respective merits, pro. and con., almost daily for upwards of three months.

His present listener was no other than our merry friend, Philip Darcy, who was eagerly cross examining his garrulous host upon every opinion affecting the interests of Charles Burton, which his extended acquaintance with the general gossip of the various fellows' tables enabled him so lavishly to report.

"You see, Mr. Darcy," said Cerberus, in a grand manner, "book-work will tell up here! Let the natural talents of the gentleman be as unequal as they will, the one that can write out his work word for word as it stands in the book, is sure to get a lift over the man who is not so pat with his learning by heart, and although we all believe that Mr. Burton can do anything which figures and mathematics can do, in problems and such like, yet the Dons all say that Mr. Robson, of St. Agnes, will copy out whole pages like them somnambules, and that if we do not get lots of stiff problems we are lost men."

"Mr. Burton does not expect to be senior wrangler," answered Darcy, "and I never dreamed of the possibility of such being the case. But do they really think, then, that he has a chance of beating them all?"

"Oh, yes! they all say that it is upon the cards, but that the chances are against him. What a day it will be for us, sir, if we do beat them all!" chuckled the worthy porter, quite identifying himself with his college, in the good old style; "and what a day for his mother, too, as nice a lady as I ever saw, for I know he cares more for the good it will do her than for himself."

"But is there no one else spoken of as likely to be first? for when I went down, not a month ago, Robson was not considered best man."

"Yes; there is Mr. Fortescue will be 'there, or thereabouts,' may be second or third, or perhaps first, for it is a very close year; but they don't think as much of him now as they did, for he goes out shooting, and even hunting, I believe, and has gone off his reading wonderfully."

"Indeed! has he?" said Darcy, in a very dubious kind of voice. "Do you know where he goes? for that story does not sound to me very probable, and I should like to ride out and catch him—shooting!"

"What! don't you think he does go out with his gun, then?" asked the porter, in amazement; "what else can take him into Bottisham Fens almost every morning?"

"Why, to lock himself up, and fag without being found out, to be sure, in order to carry off his defeat with a good grace, if he is not as high as he expected, and to throw men off their guard by a pretence of idleness; however, I should like to know a little about it, and I think I know how I can find out. Send for Jem Farren to my rooms at ten o'clock

to-morrow morning, and I will set him to work upon a little scheme; there is nothing like knowing your man. By the crooked horns of Jupiter Ammon, here's a start!" and with a very musing face he occupied himself for the next five minutes with reducing a coal to homœopathic doses, after which, he resumed his hat, and bidding the porter a cheerful good-night, walked home to his rooms very slowly and deliberately, and without a single note of his usual strange minstrelsy.



CHAPTER IV.

DARCY GRANTS "LETTERS OF MARQUE" AGAINST YELLOW LAND.

"So Robson is to be Senior Wrangler, Morris tells me," said Philip to his friend, as they sate at breakfast the next morning. "I understood that Fortescue was more likely, and that you and Robson would fight it out for second place. What has come to that much boasting hero, who ever since his first entrance has announced his intention of pulverizing his year?"

"I scarcely understand myself," answered Burton, "but I think he has got into a bad set for his reading, and has taken to shooting a good deal; indeed, I heard something of a match between him and Lord Petersford, for which he is training himself, like a great fool, at the very time when he ought to be reading for his degree."

"Not quite such a fool as you seem to think, I shrewdly suspect, Master Charlie; but a profound humbug, and as such, if I can get at him, I will lead him a pretty dance for his pains. I do not believe one word of his new-born propensities as a sportsman, and have no doubt that by ten o'clock he will be working away like a Turk, in some dirty little public-house parlour at Bottisham, pretending all the time to have been after snipes in the fen."

"I hardly think so; for it seems so utterly without motive," said his unsuspecting friend; "but he certainly has borrowed a manuscript book of me, which looks as if he were reading still; but as it seemed very *natural* that he should not entirely give up his work,

so sure as he is already of a decent place, I thought very little of it."

"As for his motives, the silly vanity of pretending that he could have done better if he had read harder, may account for that in such a mass of affectation as that puppy Fortescue, whose airs and graces remind one of nothing less than a cock sparrow in convulsions, for no dancing dog ever approached within hailing distance of the magnificence of his absurdity; and as for more solid reasons, it is not improbable that, judging you by himself, he thinks you would not have done him the courtesy of even lending him a book, had you any longer feared his surpassing you in the examination. Any how, I should like to know how the land lies, and if my suspicions are correct, I will take care that, to quote Major Bob Mahon, 'If the country is not in very low spirits, he shall be the laughing-stock of it from one end to the other.'"

The conversation then flowed into a different channel, Darcy still reserving his astounding personal secret for their mid-day ride, until the clock striking ten, warned Charles that it was time to return to his work, and a loud tap at the door announced the arrival of a visitor, whose punctual appearance at the precise hour, conveyed an impression that he was there by appointment.

"Good morning, squire," said the intruder, a tall, handsome, but slang-looking young man, in a velveteen shooting-jacket, out of the right pocket of which appeared the silky head of a tiny spaniel of the real King Charles's breed, while from the left dangled a silk handkerchief of those violently contrasted colours, which must be mixed, as one would think, in defiance of all decent taste, for the express use of dog-stealers, and lecturers at mechanics' institutes; his hat set rakishly at the side of his head, and resting on a

luxuriant mass of black hair, his stout brown corduroy trowsers, and thick, but well-made shooting-boots, all spoke unmistakeably of the amiable admixture of dog-stealer and poacher, which formed his character; and a great curiosity in his way Jem Farren was too, though to do him justice, he was, to use his own words, as decent a fellow as you could well expect a man to be, who was a regular scapegrace by profession.

"Good morning, squire; are you in wants of a toy-dog, or a dozen or two of lively rats, or a few brace of pheasants, or what? for I hear you wish to see me this morning. What can I do for you?"

"Sit down, Jem," said Darcy, taking the dog in his lap, and playing with its long ears, with the air of a man who is rather undecided how to commence a delicate subject. "I want you to go down with me into —shire next month, to shoot off some hares which are getting too thick for the farmers, and to make yourself useful to the new keepers at a place I have bought down there, and one or two other little jobs. By the by, how does Mr. Fortescue shoot? I hear he is getting a crack snipe shot, and I thought of having a day with him soon, if he is a pretty good hand at it."

Jem laughed outright. "Bless you, sir, he can't shoot none at all; he'd never kill a snipe, if he followed it to Newfoundland, a-blazing at it all the way."

"But he practises a good deal, does he not? if he is out all day, he must learn something about it."

"Out all day, sir! he only goes out for about an hour, and even then he is mumbling some gammon or other that I don't understand, out of your college books; but he never kills anything. He gives me a *shilling a-piece* for all I bag for him, and then he goes

home and crows; but don't you tell, or I shall get into a row."

"Not I, Jem; but I am glad you told me, for I think he's a bad lot, and has a worse motive than merely to brag; he wants to fight cunning about his degree, and it's a nasty dirty trick I don't like, but, however, I'll manage him, I hope. By the by, have you not a brother living near Midhampton, who is a horse-breaker, for I shall want a job of that sort done very soon, and I may as well give him a turn."

"Oh, yes; he keeps as nice a little public as ever you see, close by the town, and has good accommodation for the horses too, and a tidy parlour for the gentlemen, if they want to have a bit of a talk any night, and genuine ale and spirits as ever you drank, and wine too, if you tell him a day beforehand, for he won't give you rubbish, and he can't keep the best in store, but he'll get it for you."

"Ah! that's rather handy, for I suppose during the election, I shall want some men of his sort," said Darcy, as if half to himself.

"What election, squire? are you turning politician, then?" asked Jem.

"Alas! Jem, I have been coaxed into a very stupid promise, and I am going to be fool enough to stand for Midhampton next election, and that most likely will be in April, if not before."

"My soul, squire, but you'll make a rare Parliament man; you talk like a book already, and when you have got into the way of it like, you'll amaze them, I'll warrant."

"I've got to be elected first, my good fellow, and that is about as likely as their returning you."

"Not a bit of it," returned Jem, stoutly; "what odds will you give?"

"A thousand to one in pounds, four thousand to

one in crowns, or twenty thousand to one in shillings, just as you choose," quoth Phil, demurely.

"A thousand pounds! a deal may be done with that, squire."

"Yes! and a precious deal will have to be done with, and for it too, my dog-fancying friend; but will you take my bet?"

"Done with you, squire!" and out Jem lugged a pocket-book to enter his wager, but was instantly stopped by Phil's hand on his arm.

"Stay! my word is quite enough for you, and your own interest quite sufficient for me. Betting is illegal by the statutes of that very Parliament in which I hope to sit; and, perhaps, upon the whole, betting upon an election in which I am a candidate, might not be considered a favourable exception to the general rule, so we will carry our wager in our heads, if you please."

"Well, you are jolly particular, squire!" commenced Jem, with a very puzzled face; but catching Darcy's laughing eye, he responded with a knowing wink, "all right as the mail, sir! I was not born late last night. The top of the morning to you."

And off bustled Jem Farren with an intricate subtraction sum in his head, of which the top line was a thousand pounds, and the bottom an aggregate of certain smaller sums, the precise nature of which is a profound mystery to me, as befits a man, living in a country where all bribery or corrupt influence on an election is happily unknown.

CHAPTER V.

FORTESCUE PUTS HIS LEG INTO HIS OWN MAN TRAP.

MERRILY shone the mid-day sun, early as it yet was in the year, when the two friends rode out of Cambridge, on their voyage of discovery into the happy hunting-grounds of that martyr to a new-born sporting mania, Mr. Fortescue, of St. Agnes; and merrily too, in accordance with the fine weather, and the enlivening sound of their horses' feet, flowed on the conversation of the young students, fraught with high hopes, and brilliant anticipations of the future success in life, to which a high degree might prove the opening to the hard-working, dutiful son of the poor — shire widow.

Nor was it altogether untinged with half jesting, half serious prophecies from Charles, that a career of more than average attraction awaited his friend Darcy in the public life, to which, in obedience to the wishes of his deceased uncle, he was about to devote his early manhood. For the startling secret alluded to in the conversation of the previous night was now divulged, and Darcy, who never did anything by halves, but went into every project he had in hand with all his might, now entered with such zeal into the impending election, that his friend, who had hitherto considered him a very unusual instance of extreme indifference to such matters, was lost in amazement at the unexpected change which had so suddenly come over the easy spirit of one, usually too much occupied with field sports, or exploring expeditions into the most out-of-the-way parts of the Continent, to trouble himself about politics, or the state of party.

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But Darcy's explanation did away with some of the surprise, although he still wondered at the complete change which had been wrought, and afforded him no little insight into the energetic character of the man, so averse to dry labour by inclination, so capable of undertaking it when a fitting occasion demanded the sacrifice.

"How it all came to pass," said he, "was thus—I went to dine with the Mainwarings the day I arrived at Midhampton, to be introduced to the neighbouring families, amongst whom I intended to settle as a resident, and to take off the chill of first acquaintance, as the hospitable old Colonel kindly remarked. I had not been at table very long, before I began, from several little symptoms, to suspect that I was being drawn out upon the subject of my political prejudices, and warming into the discussion raised by my two nearest neighbours, I found myself, much to my own amazement, debating in the most vehement style on the questions of the day. It certainly did appear to me somewhat strange that the whole table should be listening to me with as wrapt attention as if I were an oracle of all sound and godly wisdom; but on I went, until happening to look into the pretty face of the young lady whom I had handed into dinner, I caught a merry smile of malicious raillery mantling over her lips, which said in an unmistakeably distinct voice—'Philip Darcy, they are trotting you out for some purpose! yea, they will lead you into bondage, and make a slave of you! upon committees shall you sit, much to your own annoyance, and the profit of your pet candidate! dead cats shall be thrown at you! hisses worthy of the Hydra of old shall greet you! and all this shall come upon you, because you must needs talk of things which you do not understand!'

"*So I pulled up short, and trying to make a rush*

out of the dry, every-day world of politics into the fairyland of flirtation, commenced a learned dissertation upon the new opera, and expressed my solemn conviction that a man must have very queer taste, who liked sitting in a house full of hot, quarrelling members of Parliament, instead of enjoying himself, like a person of decent taste, during the only time of the year when London is bearable. Never did I make a greater mistake! There was no pity for my coward soul, shrinking from the strife of party, in those laughing eyes, as my fair companion demurely replied that she was very sorry for me, since the whole neighbourhood was bent upon sending me to the argumentative coterie which I so eschewed; and that ere the suns of next June have baked the house-tops to that close heat of which London domiciles alone are capable, I should be edifying the British Senate with my maiden eloquence, in the worshipful capacity of 'the honourable member for Midhampton.' I indignantly disclaimed the imputation of being such an ass as to be so easily entrapped into so wilful a destruction of my *dolce far niente*; but, alas! I might as well have saved my trouble, for it was written in the stars that I should be conquered, and conquered I was.

"Oh, Charlie! Charlie! the first woman got the first man into a terrible hobble, and I firmly believe that the last of our sex will prove just as plastic. Turning adroitly to the general subject of elections, my pretty neighbour began to talk of the interest they excited; the nearly balanced state of the borough of Midhampton; the triumph of the Yellows—snobs always do choose yellow, somehow—when Sir Magnus Oliphant declined to stand, owing to his embarrassed circumstances; and the vexation of the gentry around to see their cause thrown away for want of a little *energy and exertion*. In a word, she worked me up

into promising to interest myself with all my heart in the return of the good old True Blue candidate, if one would offer himself. Visions of blue favours, made by pretty fingers, nay, worn as breast-knots on elegant little figures, began to float before my eyes in a very strange manner; in fact....."

"You fell desperately in love with your pretty friend," interrupted Charles. "Well, Marion seems to have a formidable rival already!"

"Perhaps so!" said Darcy, rather shily; "but really the lady in question seems a very nice girl, and a very intelligent one besides."

"Oh, yes!" quoth Charles, coolly, "Florence Montgomery is clever enough for the matter of that, and very fascinating, I will allow; but permit me to say with Tom Moore, 'The moon looks o'er many brooks, and her worshippers are as numerous as the stars in the heavens.'"

"But who said that my fair friend was the said Florence Montgomery?" asked Philip, nervously.

"Oh, I knew that before you had got half way. Well! well! you might do worse, for, fond of admiration as she is, she has an honesty of character, and a love of what is high and ennobling, that will make her a better pole-star of your destinies than the bulk of the girls upon whom your fancy might have rested. But pray go on, for I am rather curious to know how they landed the fish they managed so scientifically to tease into rising at their fly."

"After dinner," resumed Phil, "several toasts were proposed before the ladies had left the room, which had a very ominous effect, and fully corroborated the worst fears excited by the ghostly warning of the fair Florence; and when I heard myself made the subject of a most flattering eulogium on the part of old Mainwaring, I began to feel that my hour was

come. Thicker and thicker danced these abominable blue favours before my eyes, until by some extraordinary chromatic jugglery they seemed turning into white ones—don't laugh so, Charlie, or you will frighten your horse, and cause a miserable downfall—however, my 'Ebenezer was up,' as the Yankees say, and I really was beginning to feel very constitutional and valiant.

"At last, the speaker got upon the topic of my poor old uncle, whom he had known for many years, and alluding to his strong political bias, and his well-known desire to see me embrace a public life, flung the match into the well-laid train of my enthusiasm, and ruined my lazy peace for life. As he sat down, amidst great applause, I screwed myself up to meet my fate as a Darcy should, and with the low, musical laugh of the wicked siren still ringing in my ears, sprang to my legs. What I said I really hardly remember, except that it was couched in very inartistic sentences, starting off very valiantly at first, but losing themselves, like the great African rivers, nowhere in particular; but had I confined myself entirely to the bare fact that I was willing to undertake a crusade against the common enemy, I think that they would have been quite contented, for never was so bad a speech so well received. The gentleman who followed me complimented me on speaking from my heart, the value of which laudation I leave to be decided by the theologians, who aver that organ to be the most desperately wicked thing in all nature; all I know is, that my speech was very bad, and very well received. And now that I am in for it, I shall go at it with a will, and put in practice the sound principles propounded by Conan in his challenge to the devil—'Claw for claw, and ill-betide the shortest nails.' But here we are at the village; now for a stealthy attack

upon the unguarded Fortescue, which must be as cunningly arranged as an Indian war-path."

Scarcely were the words out of his mouth, than he perceived a little ragged boy, who was perched on the top of a stile as if on the watch for any travellers on the road to Cambridge, descend from his bad eminence with an air of the greatest haste, and tear down the lane which led to the village at his full speed. Almost instinctively Darcy gave chase, and quickly catching up the fugitive, brought him to with a dexterous twist of the long lash of his hunting-whip round the neck of the flying sentinel.

"Where are you off to in such a terrific hurry, my man?" asked he, as the urchin set up a dismal howl.

"Please, sir, I was set here to tell a gem'man at the Cock in Boots if I see any one looking like Cambridge swells a-coming along the road. I say, let us go, can't you?"

"No, I can't! it is quite contrary to the immutable fitness of things," replied Phil, gravely; "but I will give you half-a-crown to lead our horses up and down the lane for about ten minutes, and then bring them to the cock-loft you speak of."

The boy grinned with a much more cheerful appearance, and the two friends, dismounting from their smoking horses, and charging their extempore groom, as he valued his skin, to abstain from mounting them, set off on foot to the euphoniously-named hostelry at present honoured by the presence of Mr. Fortescue.

Upon inquiring from a slatternly tap-room girl the whereabouts of the illustrious stranger, they ascertained, much to their satisfaction, that he was deposited in an upper room, which had a little window in the door, through which they could see with perfect ease what was going on within, without being observed themselves; and stealing softly up-stairs, they

took their stand at the reconnoitring-point recommended to them. Here a sight awaited them, ludicrous enough to have excited the risibility of a far less merry pair than the present spies upon the privacy of the unconscious Fortescue, who, ignorant of the attention given to his movements, was pursuing his studies in a motley admixture of garments right joyous to behold.

He was sitting at a table covered with books and papers, clad, as to his lower limbs, in stout cord breeches and brown leather gaiters, and heavy shooting boots; but a very threadbare reading-gown belied the sporting promise of his legs, while a wet towel bound round his brows to keep his head cool during his intense mental toil, and a huge jug of barley-water standing by his side, flanked by a shot-belt and a thick dog-whip, completed the preposterous incongruity of his *tout ensemble*; unless, indeed, the gravity with which a rough water dog was sitting with one paw upon a book of astronomy, as though about to deliver some very profound remark upon that subject, may be considered as adding one little extra shade of absurdity to the grotesque group.

"Come along, Charlie," whispered Darcy, when they had fully reconnoitred the room, "I have made up my mind what to do. Don't make any noise." And down-stairs they crept as stealthily as they had come up. As they reached the foot of the stairs, they perceived the boy to whom they had given their horses, leading his charges up the lane, and anxious to stop him before his arrival became known at the inn, they hastened to meet him, making him, at the same time, a sign to stand still till they came up.

"Here! you little vagabond!" said Phil, tossing him the promised half-crown, and preparing to mount, "off with you into the village like a shot, and tell the

gentleman that you saw two swells riding this way at a slow pace, and that you think they will arrive in about ten minutes. But if you tell that we have spoken to you I'll pitch you over the hedge amongst the beehives, as sure as you're alive. Come! away with you;" and away went the boy as hard as he could pelt, in a state of rampant satisfaction at having earned his half-crown, without being discovered by his first employer in having betrayed his trust. After strolling about for ten minutes or a quarter of an hour, the two conspirators rode into the yard of the little inn, sallying forth from which, precisely as they expected, they met Fortescue in full sporting costume, with the scientific dog at his heels, and a double-barrelled gun upon his shoulder.

"Ah, Darcy!" said he, in a stately manner, "I am rather surprised to see you up now: I thought you were down at Monkworth, hunting or shooting every day, instead of mewing yourself up in College. However, every man to his taste! I am obliged to be in residence just now, because of the examinations, but I cannot afford to lose my shooting for all that; so you see that I am out with my gun again to-day, despite of that terrible to-morrow;" and he laughed affectedly.

"Well, I think you are quite right," replied Darcy; "what is the use of a man like you fagging himself to fiddle-strings, when he is as sure as you are of being very high in any case. Not but what most men will give up a good deal for a little time rather than sacrifice a single chance of being senior wrangler."

"Really, Darcy, you are too complimentary," simpered Fortescue, "when you speak of my ever having had a chance of being first; but, however that may have been once upon a time, it is all over now, for one can't enjoy one's shooting properly and read

hard too: I'm a horrid fool for my pains, I dare say, but I really cannot help giving way to my natural love of the field; for I come of a family (my mother is a Douglass, you know) which better loves to hear the lark sing than the mouse squeak."

"You a Douglass," thought Darcy to himself, "then good old Horace was right, with a vengeance, when he spoke of the continual deterioration of each succeeding race of men;" but he made no reply, except by a question as to where might be the scene of action, proposed by the descendant of the Black Earl for his fowling exploits; as he intended to borrow a gun and join him.

Fortescue made all kinds of excuses, to avoid the necessity of really wasting a day in a pursuit for which he had no true taste, but finding them all of no avail, he resigned himself to his inevitable fate with as good a grace as he could, and returned to his inn with his unwelcome companion, who soon equipped himself for the field with the assistance of the host; and leaving Charles to beguile the time of awaiting their return by looking over his recovered manuscript-book, the two sportsman plunged into the swampy fen which supplied the favourite haunts of the game of which they were in search.

"What the deuce can have brought you up at this time of year, Darcy, for I am sure you must have some particular reason?" quoth Fortescue in a knowing voice; "some fair damsel, perhaps—but I thought you pretended to be quite proof against such gentle follies."

"Why, you know, old fellow," returned the many-counselled Phil, "I am a great friend of Burton's, and I heard that he had got among a lot of gay young blades like you, who like to combine work and play in a manner which would not do at all for him, and amongst other things, that you held feasts, not only

of soul, but of spirit, in a very literal sense, viz., punch and whiskey-toddy ! so I came up to look after him a bit, for whatever you may choose to do, I don't want him to throw away a chance."

The little pig-like eyes of his amiable companion began to twinkle with a sinister expression that did not escape the quick watch of the ready-witted Phil. "You never mean to say," said he, "that our sober-sided friend, Burton, is getting too fond of a glass of toddy, do you ? I can hardly believe that."

"There are some very queer fits come over these hard-reading men at times," replied Darcy, in an oracular tone, "great pulls upon the spirits often create a craving for artificial stimulus you know ; at any rate he is none the worse for a friend to take him away if he goes a-head too fast."

"Pooh ! he'll never hurt himself that way," responded Fortescue, with another sinister smile, which Phil read as easily as though his thoughts had been printed.

The conversation here dropped, or at least was directed to other objects, but not before a plan to ruin the chance of a high place for Charles Burton had flashed across the mind of the one, while a perfect knowledge of the fact that it had done so, accompanied by a counter plan for executing poetical justice on the offender, had taken firm hold of the mind of the other.

As it is not my intention to attempt to amuse the reader with the tragi-comic adventures of a would-be sportsman, so often and so ably handled before, I shall pass over the events of the afternoon with no further notice than merely to say, that Fortescue arrived at the Cock in Boots a little after sunset, wet, dog-tired, and dispirited, but recovered sufficiently, after a glass of cherry-brandy, to invite his two visitors to a little

supper at his rooms that night, which invitation was cheerfully accepted at once by Darcy, and after some hesitation, and a great deal of mysterious prompting upon the part of his friend, by Charles also.

The trio then set off upon their return home, Fortescue in a hired dog-cart, and the other two on horseback as they had come; Darcy conducting himself all the way in the most insane manner, bursting from an almost gloomy silence into sudden shouts of laughter, and quoting to himself, with most wearing monotony,

“Oh, valiant man! with drawn sword and cocked trigger,
Now, tell me! don't you cut a pretty figure?”

Nine o'clock arrived, and loud was the mirth, and Babel-like the mixture of voices of the students collected round the board of the scheming Fortescue, who hoped to derive no small benefit from the unguarded hint of Burton's weak point, dropped that morning by Philip Darcy. He had easily enough got together, even at that short notice, a tolerably large party of the men reading for a common degree, or for low honours, and one grand lion besides, the sight of whom set Darcy off in another of his inexplicable fits of merriment, being no other than that very Robson, before-mentioned as a likely man to prove senior wrangler. “The cat began to eat the mouse, the dog began to worry the cat,” chanted Phil, in his usual odd style of lyrical soliloquy, as he saluted the gentlemen in question with great courtesy, and moved, “That Mr. Robson do take the Vice-President's chair,” while he himself took his seat next to the host, with whom he kept up a lively conversation.

Swiftly the bottle sped round, and hospitably did Fortescue press his guests to punish the wine, over which, as in a flowery manner he reminded them, they

would seldom, if ever, all meet again, and eagerly did he watch, with that hang-dog like look of his, how every man emptied his glass, though practising every art in his power to shirk his potations himself. At last, Darcy rose from the table, and disappearing in the gyp-room, produced a huge tea-tray, which he deposited at the feet of his host, and then resumed his seat with a placid countenance, and without speaking a word.

"What the deuce is that for?" asked Fortescue, angrily.

"Merely to catch the wine which you keep shying under the table," returned Phil, coolly. "Why, man! you have bathed my legs with the rosy nectar until my very boots are full! 'Waste not, want not,' my good fellow; and though Heaven forbid that any man in his senses should want such stuff to drink himself, after he leaves here, yet you may one day want it for charity, and any rubbish, you know, does for that!" The whole table was in a roar, and the ill-starred host began to suspect that he was getting into a scrape.

"Hoot awa', man!" said the vice-president, in a rough north-country accent, "thou'lt not be playing the old soldier upon us that gate, I can tell thee! take thy liquor down fairly, like a man, or else own that thou canst not stand it! it is no such great shame to thee, if thou be'st a bit of a molly in such things, that you need'st lie to hide it; but speak out fairly at any rate."

Fortescue's vanity was roused: he had always been a hard-reading, temperate young man, and quite unaccustomed to more wine than an occasional glass or two at his father's table, or at the sober parties of his steady friends, before he took up this foolish and dishonest affectation of idleness; he was ignorant, at ~~that~~ *not in practice*, of the insidious effects of first

approaches to excess, and he trusted to himself to leave off, if needs be, before the danger became imminent.. Luckless youth ! he was now experiencing for the first time the dangerous exhilaration which is so often mistaken for mere excess of health and spirits, or unusual brilliancy of thought, and he flattered himself that he was wreathing with flowers of wit and fascinating merriment the fatal bowl of temptation for his rival, while in good truth every minute, and every jest, was bringing himself to the very pit he had dug for another.

And that hard-headed Northumbrian at the bottom of the table was a terrible stumbling block to him, for however well he might hold his own with the bulk of his guests, who themselves had an extra inducement to keep themselves cool that night, or with the almost fastidiously temperate Darcy, there was nothing to be done with a man like Robson ; for the wine, or even the punch, seemed only child's play to a younker educated upon whiskey in his yeoman home in the north ; and taking his glass fairly and above-board, as stoically as if he were rooted to his chair, sate smoking and roaring snatches of queer songs, the embodied destiny of the fated hypocrite.

Fainter and fainter grew his self-control, and wilder his mirth, as every minute rolled on, till at last his voice was the noisiest of the whole company ; and his jovial upbraidings of Charles Burton—who had left the room an hour ago—for stopping the bottle, were heard almost unceasingly amidst the uproar which filled the room. But I have no wish to linger upon the painful scene of this treacherous schemer against his rival for University honours, falling a victim to his own low craft ; suffice it to say, that a little before midnight a melancholy procession was formed to the *adjoining bedroom*, consisting of the gallant host borne

by four of his guests, preceded by Philip Darcy with a candle ; and that the latter shortly after returned to his own college, singing to himself, as he walked briskly along through the deserted streets :—

“ We took him up, and we put him to bed,
And we told his wife and his daughter
Next morning to give him a couple of red
Herrings and soda water.”

CHAPTER VI.

A LOVE LETTER NOT MEANT TO BE "PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL."

A DAY or two after the Bacchanalian revels at Fortescue's rooms, a party of three ladies rode merrily out of the avenue gates of a handsome mansion near the good borough of Midhampton, and took their way at a smart pace over the extensive moor which lies to the north of the town, stretching as far as the eye can reach, without a break of either tree or house, until bounded in the distance by a high range of heath-clad hills.

They were all young, and all favourable specimens of English superiority in good looks over most of the races of the continent ; but with the exception of this one general similarity of youth and beauty, they were as unlike each other as though they had been selected as types of different styles or tastes in loveliness.

The eldest, who had very recently celebrated her twentieth birthday, slightly formed, and with small, delicate features, yet by no means devoid of the roundness and freshness of colour indicative of good health and active habits, seemed, with her merry laugh, and bright, intelligent face, the very ideal of that *ne-plus-ultra* of Nature's aristocracy, a well-born, clever, highly-educated, English maiden, graceful and refined even in the wildest exuberance of her mirth, and redolent of the very highest stage of mental culture and polish in every movement of her supple form, and every jest of her joyous heart.

Reining her high-spirited Arab with a skilful hand, free alike from any appearance of either masculine habits or the hacknied lessons of the riding-school, which make so many of our girls manage their horses more like circus-women than young ladies, she cantered swiftly along, with her pet greyhound by her side, as pleasant a portion of the landscape as the heart of painter could desire, so that in attributing to Florence Montgomery an extensive dominion over the hearts of the bachelorhood of the surrounding country, Charles Burton had cast no reflection upon the good taste of their choice, or the difficulty of satisfying them.

At a respectful distance to the right of the fair Florence, as though fearful that the prancings of her scarcely half-broken chesnut might endanger her companion's safety, rode a young girl of about fifteen, whose raven hair and southern cast of countenance betrayed her kindred with the inhabitants of sunnier climes, though her skin was as fair as that of most other English girls, and there was nothing foreign either in her dress or manners. Indeed, she was not very distantly allied to the ill-starred Moslem race, who have left behind them such traces of their magnificence and love of the beautiful, in the glorious halls of the Alhambra; for the grandmother of Leila Mainwaring was a Spaniard of well-known Moorish extraction, and many characteristics of the far-famed beauty of her ancestral nation were unmistakeably visible in the lovely girl, who managed her fiery steed with such consummate skill, upon the bleak English heath, to which our history has now translated us.

She was usually considered the quintessence of lazy good-humour, and the possibility of seriously ruffling her temper was considered by many persons a matter of great doubt, but a close observer might at times discover a very *Gulnare*-like expression in her dark,

almond-shaped eyes, and about the little, arched mouth, that pretty plainly betokened what her anger would be when once aroused; and as Philip Darcy, who had known her from her cradle, once parabolically remarked, "a hurricane once in fifty years is generally considered rather a drawback to the safety of a residence in those islands where such freaks of nature are liable to occur, no matter how seldom." However, as the said Philip had never reported any details of the tornado which he was supposed to have witnessed, and no one else in the neighbourhood in which she now resided had seen one at all, she passed for the best tempered little thing living, and being extremely clever, and very lively in conversation, if you would but give her an arm-chair to talk in, and a very model of unselfish generosity and freedom from petty jealousies, she was a very popular member of the juvenile society of Midhampton, and a notable leader of all the fun and mischief going on for miles around her father's house. On horseback she was active enough—a true descendant of the Moors in that respect—and, indeed, out of doors she was by no means slow or languid in her movements, but once reclining on her darling ottoman, no cat ever dozed in the sunshine with a profounder sense of dreamy comfort than the pretty Leila.

Marion Burton, who completed the trio of fair equestrians, was a fine, well-grown girl of thirteen, whose open, ingenuous countenance, and broad, expansive brow, spoke favourably for the straight-forward clearness of her moral perceptions, as well as mental faculties, while her rich, dark hair, bright and transparent complexion, and large, violet eyes, combined, with a figure singularly rounded and flexible for such a mere child, to make her a very handsome *as well as* loveable little maiden. A quaint remark

of her friend Florence, who treated her in all respects as a very pet sister, may serve to give a tolerably good idea of the general impression which she produced at first sight, viz.: that if the stranger were a lady, she instantly began to think what a charming young man her brother must be; or, if a foreigner of the sterner sex, he could the better comprehend why the men who have such mothers and sisters are always first and foremost in all they undertake. In fact, it was the whole expression of the countenance, even more than the countenance itself, which so attracted the eye of an observer, handsome as the child undeniably was, and one found oneself looking, not so much at the features of that wonderfully pleasing face, as at the honesty, high-spirit, and intellect so unmistakeably depicted upon it.

"Charlie seems to be getting on capitally," said she, in high delight, to her companions, "and has done better than he ever ventured to hope, during the first two days, and though they are very far from being the most trying part, yet, as they have put him in good spirits for the rest, I am full of hopes that he will come home to us covered all over with laurels."

"And how kind of him," said Leila, "in the midst of all his nervousness and fatigue, to have written to you to ease your mind of all anxiety or suspense."

"Oh, dear me, no, Leila! my letter was not such a milk-and-water affair as that! It was a kind of love-letter, from a very gay gentleman indeed, and ought, I suppose, to have put me in quite a flurry, but as it is, I am afraid that I am rather too calm."

"Who is your correspondent then, Menie?" asked Florence, turning quickly round.

"Can't you guess? ah, spare my blushes! Thank

you ! I see you are blushing for me, which is very considerate of you indeed. But who do you think my new friend can be ?”

“ My dear Menie ! how should I know the names of all the boys who set you up as the idol of their ridiculous admiration ?”

“ But my correspondent is not a boy, Floss, and his admiration ought not to be very ridiculous to you, at any rate, for, to tell the truth, though it is a rather lover-like letter, it is not redolent of any misguided admiration of me, but of indirect praise of you ! and as it is said that any stick will do to beat a dog, any child, I presume, will do to listen to the praises of your ladye-love. Know then, most illustrious Floss, that I have received a letter from Mr. Darcy, the greater part of which is about you, and which, if you will slacken your pace into a walk, I will read out to you, that you may judge for yourself.

“ ‘ Philip Darcy, a poor clerk of Cambridge, to Maid Marion, Sovereign Lady of the merry greenwood, greeting.

“ ‘ I have performed your bidding, in cheering the spirits of your brother in his present trial of nerve and endurance, to the utmost of my power, and I am happy to be able to report, that I have hitherto been very successful. A contemptible, low-minded animal named Fortescue, of whom you have perhaps heard Charlie speak, laid a very disgraceful and treacherous snare for him, by asking him to supper, and trying to induce him to drink too much (as if old Charlie was likely to be caught in such a swinish manner as that), but his dirty artifice recoiled upon himself, thanks to a hard-headed north countryman, who played precisely the same trick upon him, and before I left his rooms, Mr. Fortescue was enacting the principal cha-

racter in a *tableau-vivant*, selected from the 'Ingoldsby Legends,' wherein it is recorded that

Roger, the monk, got excessively drunk,
So they put him to bed and tucked him in.

The next morning I went down with Charlie to the Senate House, and sent him in full of spirits and in racing condition, that is to say, quite fit for work, and without a symptom of the nervousness which so alarmed us a day or two ago, while Mr. Fortescue looked more like a half-strangled cat than a Christian gentleman, and his eyes were the eyes of a ferret in point of redness.

" 'I am not very learned in mathematics myself, and even if I were, you would understand very little about the heathenish sounding names of the subjects in which Charlie has been examined already, so I will spare you all further details, and only say that he has been doing very well as yet, and was remarkably fortunate in two tremendously stiff problems in a certain mysterious subject called Conic Sections, which has something to do, I believe, with cutting up a sugar-loaf in a decent and comely manner, and is also privy to the evolutions of the heavenly bodies, more especially the little eccentricities of the comets, not that I pretend to be able to trace this connexion between the observatory and the store closet. However, it has turned out very well indeed, somehow, and as he has gone off at his best pace, he has only to keep it up to come out gloriously. To-morrow they will get into some tremendously heavy ground—I mean that there will be some unusually difficult subjects to take in.....' Now, don't giggle so, Lola! it is a very forcible metaphor indeed, as old Miss Tabbinet would say."

"Poor Phil!" laughed Leila, or as she was more usually called, Lola, as an euphuistic soubriquet indicative of her habit of lolling about upon easy chairs and sofas; "poor Phil! his similes are very liable to smell of the stable, except when he is very stilted indeed, and then he generally has recourse to the stars."

"What a very uncomfortable simile of yours, by the by, my dear child!" said Florence, almost angrily.

"At any rate, it is as elegant as saying of a learned book that it smells of the midnight lamp, for that means in broad Saxon, that it is redolent of train-oil and dirty brass," retorted the undismayed Leila.

"But he really is very sporting in his ideas. Now, proceed Menie!"

".....Some unusually difficult subjects to take in," resumed Menie, continuing the perusal of her epistle at the place where it had been so roughly interrupted by Leila, "'in which, if he is as lucky as he was this morning, he will pound Robson, who is the only man he fears much now, and if we can once shake him off, Charlie will be senior wrangler.'"

"Pound Mr. Robson!" said Florence, opening her large eyes to a most superhuman extent; "what, bray him in a mortar? as Solomon recommends doing to fools, as the last desperate remedy for their mental infirmities. What can he mean?"

"O Floss, you ignoramus!" burst in Leila, "every goose understands that; he means running him to a stand-still. Oh dear! I mean—you must know what he means," continued she, in a half-laughing, half-angry tone, as peal after peal of ringing merriment came from the lips of her two companions, at this consistent evidence of her dislike to sporting metaphors.

"Lola don't much like anyone else beside herself to make fun of Mr. Darcy, I suspect," said Menie, mali-

ciously ; “but now, Floss, comes the really flowery and poetical part of the letter.

“ ‘So when Charlie has finished his university career for good, and has won all the honours that are to be got, and ensconced himself in a snug fellowship at St. Barnabas, he will come down with me into —shire, and introduce me in a proper manner to your mother, whose acquaintance, as you know, I have not yet had any opportunity of making, though I trust that before many days have elapsed, I shall be able to congratulate her in person, on the success of her son.

“ ‘I cannot tell you, by the by, how pleased I was to hear from Miss Montgomery’ (now Floss, hide your face with a dock-leaf), ‘that you were so enthusiastically fond of poetry and painting, and indeed of everything for which I should like my old friend’s sister to express a taste ; and as my motto has always been *Laudari a laudato*, which means, that I value praise only when it comes from those who deserve commendation themselves, it gave me sincere delight to hear so good an account of you from such excellent authority. Indeed, so carefully as you have been brought up, and mixing in the most refined society, thanks to the sisterly kindness of your affectionate friend, and hearing none but the most ladylike and honourable sentiments from those around you, it would perhaps have been rather extraordinary, if you had not acquired some of the same elegance and purity of taste yourself ; but still you must have been an apt pupil, to have so perfectly acquired the spirit of admiration for everything which tends to elevate the mind, which I rejoice so much to discover in you.’ Here follows a rather too sentimental passage to be read out before that jeering Leila, who seems

bent upon ridiculing all the prettiest parts of my letter, but you can read it for yourself."


So saying, she tossed the letter to Florence, and darted off at the full speed of the dappled gray, with which her sisterly friend almost daily provided her, for the air and exercise so necessary for the health of a girl of her age. Leila followed, sitting her wildly-bounding steed as imperturbably as though she were still seated in her easy chair; and scampering across the moor at a pace which threatened to carry them in the next county at the very least, the two children left Florence Montgomery to finish her perusal by herself.

What she there read is not on record, but it was with a very heightened colour, and a somewhat saddened face, that she completed her task, upon which she expended a considerable time, pausing over certain sentences, and apparently weighing their importance with a serious and not altogether self-contented expression of countenance; and upon their return home, her young companions remarked with some surprise that all her merriment was gone, and that a subdued and almost depressed manner had taken the place of her previously exuberant mirth.

"Menie," said she, as she restored the letter to her little pet, and sent her with an affectionate embrace joyfully bounding homewards, "let it be your greatest wish throughout life to become what Mr. Darcy desires to see you, and what he erroneously imagines to be the character of poor giddy Floss Montgomery."

And, in good truth, that careless merry effusion of the good-natured cantab to his child sweetheart, had no little influence on the whole life and conduct of the gentle girl who had just read it, and by teaching her
to feel how much more delightful a thing it is to

be really honoured and respected by a good and noble nature, than to be the centre of attraction to the gay and thoughtless, had given her mind a decided leaning towards the best impulses of her generous, but hitherto somewhat coquettish heart, which it never again lost.



CHAPTER VII.

DARCY WORSHIPS BRITANNIA THROUGH THE MEDIUM OF AN
IDOL.

THE eventful week passed somewhat heavily to the two friends, despite of all Darcy's endeavours to raise the spirits of the anxious candidate for the honours of Alma Mater. The days were almost entirely spent by Charles in the Senate House, and by Philip in fidgeting backwards and forwards, and longing to hear his report of how he had been faring in the last paper; the evenings brought too much weariness and exhaustion to the one to leave him much energy to talk or to be amused, and of course could not be violently lively to the other, though his consciousness of being really useful to his friend made him tolerably contented with his position; but both of them practised the virtue of patience as well as they could, and since time must eventually pass away somehow, even if you do nothing to speed its departure, which was hardly the case with Charles Burton, whatever it may have been with Phil, the weary week at last came to an end, and the struggle was over, although the result would yet remain unknown for some days.

"I can't stand this any longer, Charlie," said Darcy to his friend, the evening after the examination was concluded; "it was all very well as long as I was any use in keeping you in spirits, and so on, but I see no fun in it now, so I shall be off to-morrow morning at nine, and if you take my advice you will too, and spend 'suspense-week' with your mother. It will be quite time enough to come back on Thursday night,

in order to be in time for the publishing of the lists on Friday morning."

"As for my going," replied Charles, "that is a matter of absolute impossibility. You forget that I have another examination still before me, for which I must prepare now; for although I feel quite convinced that you are far too sanguine in your anticipations of my possibly proving senior wrangler, I really am beginning to entertain some little hopes of being first Smith's prizeman, as Robson is, I myself think, hardly my equal in problems, though decidedly my superior in bookwork; and Fortescue, I take for granted, is quite out of the question now."

"Yes, poor animal! not that he deserves a grain of pity after his shabby trick towards you; but his self-inflicted punishment is heavy enough, for he will be nowhere."

"I should fear not," said Charles, compassionately, "for I believe he did little or nothing even the first two days, and a man as ill as he was, could not have been fit for such work as the remainder. But I am really very sorry for him, since with all his affectation he was more vain and foolish than intentionally bad."

Darcy shrugged up his shoulders in dissent, but said nothing in contradiction, and for some minutes the conversation dropped altogether, each pursuing his own thoughts. Charles was the first to break the silence.

"You are going down to Midhampton I suppose, from what you said about my accompanying you to see my mother; are you going to make investigations into how the land lies with the free and independent electors, or have you any private business on hand, or do you merely answer with Hamlet's very uninteresting friend, 'a truant disposition, good my lord?'"

"*The friends of heroes always are very uninterest-*

ing," quoth Phil, philosophically; "witness that shocking ninny-hammer 'Fidus Achates,' to omit the mention of many equally doleful specimens. But as for my visit to Midhampton, I have, as you suggest, to look after my electioneering interests, and also to make some arrangements about the shooting, and to give orders about certain restorations of the poor old Hall; and finally, I have promised to assist, as the eaters of frogs would say, at Leila's birth-night party, when all the beauty, and ugliness besides, of the neighbourhood, will be congregated together in one fervent mass."

"Including your new goddess, I suppose?" said Charles, laughing.

"Yes! I think your sister is to be there. I am not sure, but I should fancy so, for I understand that there are to be people of all ages, and as she appears a great favourite with Leila, she is certain of receiving an invitation."

"Is Florence Montgomery likely to be present, do you know?" asked the student, slyly. "Oh, Phil, Phil! the ostriches are not alone in their vain expectations of hiding themselves from the eyes of their pursuers by poking their own heads into the sand; but perhaps you have some very pressing business at Midhampton, about making up those blue and white favours you spoke of."


"I never mentioned anything half so hideous!" returned Phil, indignantly; "I merely suggested, that after the parading of the blue ribands was over, the white might make an agreeable change; but as for mixing them, I never dreamt of such a thing."

"At any rate, old fellow, if you do not intend to mix the blue and white in your favours, it is evident enough that you are intermingling them in your *thoughts* to some purpose, and that you intend to

unite your devotion to your party and that to your lady love as inextricably as possible. Well, I heartily wish you success in both of your undertakings."

"To tell you the plain, unvarnished truth, Charlie, my love for my country, or rather my willingness to embrace any very disagreeable duties in her service, most marvellously requires foreign aid to render it strong enough to endure any severe trial, and although my enthusiasm might possibly be raised to the requisite pitch by an appeal to do battle for 'the maids of merry England,' I fear that a similar adjuration to do or die for our spinning-jennies or our tallow trade would fall upon very deaf ears indeed. Like the immortal Mark Tapley, who in kissing Mrs. Lupin embraced his country, I think that the more I can connect the prospect of standing for the borough with the idea of a personal sacrifice upon the altar of my fair enslaver, the more in earnest I shall be in prosecuting my canvass; and you may rely upon it that I shall need some stimulus, to force my unwilling nose to endure the stench, and my hands to shake the dirty paws, and my ears to listen to the miserable twaddling which I shall have to undergo ere I reach St. Stephen's, even if I should ever attain that haven of disquiet at all."

Phil about this time got rather over-sentimental, and there is no necessity to inflict upon the reader what his ill-fated friend was compelled to endure with such patience as he could summon up. We will therefore once more leave our student to while away the week that must yet elapse ere his fate be known, by preparing himself for his second struggle, and transport ourselves to Midhampton, where the future of Philip Darcy is already throwing before it "the shadows of coming events."



CHAPTER VIII.

FLORENCE MISTAKES CUPID FOR ANOTHER PERSON.

“ YOU need not light the candles yet, Kathleen ; just close the shutters, and draw the curtains. I will ring when I want you, for I shall not begin to dress for half an hour yet.”

And almost before the words were fairly past her lips, Florence Montgomery had sunk back in her easy chair with an air of such perfect abstraction, as to render it a matter of great doubt whether she even heard the movements of her light-footed attendant quietly but actively obeying her mistress's directions.

Long after the girl was gone did she continue in her reverie, gazing absently into the fire, whose flickering light gleamed fitfully over her half-reclining figure, as leaning luxuriously back in her comfortable seat she almost unconsciously played with the large white Persian cat, which, rolling on the hearth-rug at her feet, was snatching in high glee at the tasteful little green velvet slipper extended to her, from time to time, by her pensive mistress.

On the table lay a county paper of the most violent principles and uncompromising hatred to all and every one, except the very lowest and vilest ; and to something therein contained the lady's thoughts appeared to be wandering, if we may judge from the broken sentences which occasionally fell from her lips, and to which we shall now give a more connected and intelligible form.

“ I am bitterly sorry that I ever had anything to

do with persuading the poor fellow to come forward. He really seemed a very gentlemanly and intelligent young man, and not at all like the giddy boy I expected to see, and of whom we intended to make a political cat's-paw. How heartily, too, he seemed to feel the allusions to his uncle, and how anxious he was to do anything which he thought would appear a compliment to his memory. I am afraid that we treated him very badly in making his best feelings the levers whereby to move him in the direction we desired, and I believe that had it not been for me they would not so easily have caught him. I was certainly blameable for pretending to take such an interest in his standing." Here a deep flush suffused the whole face and neck of the day-dreamer, but whether of shame for her previous falsehood, or of consciousness that the interest was not quite so unreal as she wished to persuade herself, who shall venture to decide? "And to drag him forward," continued she, "to be the target for all the missiles of abuse so freely lavished on all who happen to be above the common herd, by the 'fourth estate' of this independent and free-spoken country. Well, well, pussy!" giving the cat a playful push with her foot, "the moon shines none the less brightly for being bayed at by all the tailless sheep dogs on the moors, or by all the wolves on the Pyrennees either, does it? and considering that Aristides, the only respectable man of honour the Athenians ever possessed, was banished for that presumptuous singularity by scribbling his name on an oyster-shell, perhaps after all, there is no great hardship in having the said shells thrown at one instead. Yet I am heartily sorry that I took any part in persuading a young man like Mr. Darcy to forsake the pursuits and pleasures natural to his age and station, for the thankless task of elbowing *his way through the miry roads of politics*, to a very

uncertain tenure of power at the very best, and most probably to useless vexation and disappointment."

Her musings were here interrupted by the re-entrance of Kathleen, with a magnificent bouquet of hot-house flowers. "With Mr. Darcy's compliments, miss, and the groom waits for an answer."

"An answer, Kathleen?" said Florence, rousing herself; "is there a note then?" and she held out her hand for the letter.

The envelope simply contained a card of the dances at Leila's party, and a pencilled request "to be permitted the honour of Miss Montgomery's hand for any, or all, of the measures therein mentioned." She hastily appended her name to a quadrille, dismissed Kathleen with an injunction to return in a quarter of an hour, and again resigned herself to her easy chair, where she held a somewhat long conversation with her confidante the cat; and puss, to give her her due, was the very model of a well-bred minister, in the bland assent she gave to every remark in which she agreed, by rubbing her face against that of her mistress, while she preserved a respectful but significant silence upon such subjects as there is reason to imagine (from the pensive way in which she rubbed her nose with her paw,) did not strike her in precisely the same light as her honoured lady. The consultation was broken off, while still in high debate, by the reappearance of Kathleen, with an intimation that the duties of the toilette must commence forthwith, unless Miss Montgomery meant to keep the carriage waiting; an offence of such deep dye in the eyes of her father, that he hardly believed it possible that his idolized daughter could be guilty of it, despite the numerous authentic instances of similar recklessness which had occurred within his own knowledge, on the

part of young people not altogether devoid of good feeling, or dead to all sense of propriety.

While the important business of dressing is going on, we will take a glance at the newspaper which lies upon the table, and endeavour to discover the paragraph which had so peculiarly attracted the attention of our pretty friend an hour ago. It was headed thus :—

“BLACK AND BLUE WITH A VENGEANCE !”

“We have just been informed that at a hole and corner meeting for the purpose of prosecution of the usual Blue corruption, held at the house of a certain man of war, who has long served his country in the arduous fields of Knightsbridge and Windsor, and even in the far distant climes of Cork and Dublin, which precious assembly was attended by a large proportion of the squires and parsons who infest the neighbourhood, a young slip of the Universities has been fool enough to permit himself to be coaxed into promising to offer himself as a candidate for the representation of Midhampton at the next general election, which is currently reported to be likely to take place in the ensuing spring. It is our duty to impress upon all the wide circle of our readers the necessity of observing a humane forbearance towards this boyish coxcomb, as he pursues his canvass through the streets of the soundly liberal city above-mentioned ; and let us beseech the men of the good town by no means to allow their honest indignation to betray them into committing any acts which may be misconstrued by a partial magistracy into illegal violence. And when we consider the difficulty of detecting the perpetrator of any chastisement which an over-goaded people might be misguided enough to inflict upon one who seeks to rivet their *chains yet closer*, we are lost in amazement at the

confidence in the meek endurance of the suffering operatives, evinced by this insolent attempt to wrest from the popular party a seat so emphatically the stronghold of Liberty and Independence."

"You may take away your paper, Kathleen, when you go down stairs," said Florence, pointing to the journal which contained the paragraph in question, "I have read the only piece of news in it which I wanted to see, and have had quite enough of it. But I am extremely sorry that any of you should find pleasure in reading such wicked and malignant trash."

"But sure, Miss Florence, is it not very good advice indeed to give to those fellows who might feel disposed to be rough with Mr. Darcy? and isn't it all as soft as silk? The worst of it is, that people generally read these sort of things crab-fashion, backwards-like, and go and do the very things they were told not to do. Och! but Major Delaney, of the Rangers, got himself into the mischief's own scrape that way once at Ballyraggamuffin; and although he swore by the grandmother of St. Patrick's piper, that he advised the boys all for the best, wasn't he as near as possible bruk, just because the stupid gossoons did not understand what he meant."

"That is no reason why you should pull away at my hair as if you were hand-weeding the potatoe patch at home," said Florence, laughing, as the terribly spoilt little bower maiden proceeded with the most extraordinary gestures, and Irish vivacity, to give due emphasis to the tale she was narrating.

"I beg your pardon, miss! I'll be as gentle as if I was brushing a butterfly's wing: only do let me tell you the story, for it was just such another mistake as I am afraid the gentleman who wrote in this paper has been making about Mr. Darcy. Major Delaney (*Heaven rest his soul!* for he died one night with his

nose in a punch-bowl, after a little friendly supper with a Glasgow relation of his) had a funny habit of buying everything for nothing, at least he never paid a single soul, and the tradespeople were sometimes very disrespectful to him, and sent writs after him, and made themselves very rude and disagreeable, until at last, though he was the best humoured man in the world, he used sometimes to get the least taste in life short of temper. One morning, as he was leaning out of his window in his shirt sleeves, smoking a short pipe, for he always said that cigars were unnational, and only fit for fellows who lived upon garlic, and never washed themselves except on the great festivals of the church, he saw two men dressed like farmers coming into the barrack yard, and peering about them in search of somebody.

“‘Good morning, Captain!’ says one of them, civilly, ‘fine weather for the grass, and as good as gold for the crops too! May I trouble you to tell me who is in command here? I want to see if I can’t deal for some hay; I have some as fine as ever you smelt.’

“‘Yah!’ said the major, ‘you know me well enough, Nick Flanagan, and who is in command here too: get along with you about your hay! what the blazes do the infantry want with hay, except the young officers, and they buy their own, and by the same token they never pay for it either. You want to be trotting round me, I know; but you’ll have to get up very early in the morning to manage that, I can assure you, my boy.’

“‘I know nothing about Nick Flanagan, I tell you,’ said the man, sulkily, ‘and I want to see the Major.’

“‘Look away then, Nick,’ says he, ‘here I am, framed and glazed, when the window is down at least, like a beautiful picture, and as fine a man as any in the regiment, though I say it myself; but ‘visitors are

requested not to touch,' as they say in show-houses and you're not going to lay your dirty paws on me.'

"'Bad luck to your Nick Flanagan,' repeated the farmer, angrily, 'I don't know such a man, and I never heard of him in my life.'

"'The better luck yours,' said the Major, civilly, 'listeners never hear any good of themselves, and it's a mercy that you don't hear all that folks say of you. But I should know your little parchment nose, if I saw it peeping out from underneath St. Peter's gown, not that you'll ever go where he is ! and once more I tell you that you are not coming in here.'

"Meanwhile up came a lot of the boys, and stood all round the two strangers, wondering what was going on.

"'I am very sorry to tell you, lads,' begun Delaney, 'that I am going to leave you directly, and it's afraid I am that I'll not be coming back for a long time. I am going to gaol with Nick Flanagan, the process-server, and goodness knows when I shall be out ; I'll have to be white-washed, and upon my soul, scouring the blackamoor white will be a mere joke to scrubbing all my debts off me ; they're fairly grained into me, I believe, and I doubt whether all the Commissioners this side purgatory will ever get them out of me. In prison I'll die, as sure as there is whiskey at Donnybrook, or salmon in the Blackwater, so I'll just say good-bye to you at once, and go off peaceably. Old McGrowler will take my place ; he won't punish you much I dare say, but he's a godly man, and will be harder to deal with than me, poor sinner that I am ! so mind your eye, my boys ! or it's in trouble you'll be before to-morrow night ! Now, Nick, I'm quite ready,' and made as though he were about to get out of window.

"You never heard such a phillilew as the boys

made, when he said he must go to gaol, for they all liked him uncommonly for his fun and devilment, and he was a smart, good officer, too, though very good-natured to them, so they could not bear to lose him.

“ ‘Don’t be violent, boys!’ shouted the major; ‘respect the majesty of the law, and don’t attempt to obstruct Nick in doing his duty. Och! but I’d never forgive myself if any one was to drive them chaps’ hats over their eyes, and pitch them into the pond; and as for nailing that little fellow’s ears to the pump, upon my life, I think it would be the death of me.’

“ ‘Do you know, miss, that not ten minutes after Major Delaney had left the window, to get a few things together to go to gaol all nice and decent, a man comes running into his room, and calling out ‘Major! they are off to the town like shots, for help, and they swear all sorts of vengeance against us; but you’ll stand up for us, won’t you?’ says he, ‘for if you don’t, there’ll be a nice hot mess for some of us.’

“ ‘What’s the matter?’ says the major; ‘I’m too much engaged to be disturbed in this manner just now; and you are not respectful enough in your salute, my man, that is another thing.’

“ ‘Murder!’ says Terence Maloney, ‘but it’s not yourself that is turning against us, surely! and he did the worst part of it himself.’

“ ‘Did the worst part of what? You’ve been drinking, I’m afraid, and Captain McGrowler will be down upon you for a certainty; but who did what, my good fellow?’

“ ‘Oh, Major!’ says the man, ‘don’t you go for to take part against us, for we did it all for the best! *but one of the boys* drove Nick’s hat over his eyes,

and I..... another of them, I meant to say, did the thing that's handsome for Bobby Cregan, and then they hustled them across the yard on to the common, where there is an old sign-post, and they nailed Nick to it by the ear, as neat as a dead kite, quite delicately and softly, so as not to inconvenience him much, and then they ran away for a little distance, and hid behind a hedge to see what he would do. But may I die in sin, if old Nick didn't pull out a knife, and cut off the bottom of his ear as clean as a slice of turnip ! and off he set after the other fellow, whom the boys had let go, after kicking him part of the way to the town ; and that's the end of it.'

" 'End of it !' says the Major, 'I think it looks a precious deal more like the beginning ! Why could you not take my advice, and let the poor man alone ? but I'll not forsake you, you graceless dogs, for it's a bad lot that you are, and want a quiet, steady man, like me, to look after you. No ! I'll not leave you to yourselves, lest you go on from bad to worse.' "

" Well ! how did it end ?" asked Florence, "only be quick, for it is a very long story."

" Why, miss ! there was a great fuss about it, and the Major was to be tried, I believe, and everybody said that he'd be broken ; but he knew better than that, so he goes to Nick with a thundering big whip, and 'Look here,' says he, 'honour's a jewel, and glory is a much finer thing to any real man than a few dirty halfpence.' "

" 'Oh, burn your glory !' said Nick, in a towering passion.

" 'Listen to me, and reason,' says the Major, politely, 'and I'll tell you what I'd do if I were you. I'd take such a whip as this, and I'd lay it well over the shoulders of the man who had offended me, and then I'd go to the fair, and tell everybody I met, that I'd

served him out myself, and didn't want any lawyer-chaps to right me—that's what I'd do. It's a deal better than going to law, like a sneak, and carrying your ear about to Assizes in a bit of paper, like a screw of tobacco.'

"'But how on earth is the likes of me to take it out of your bones, Major?' replied Nick; 'it's all very fine to give me advice like that, but you know very well I can't follow it. Why, you'd double me up and put me in your pocket, if I tried it on.'

"'Whist, my boy,' says the major, 'give and take is fair play, all the world over! and you shall do it, honour bright and shining, without my even sneezing, for fear of knocking you down.'

"'In the fair then,' grinned Nick, 'all honest and above-board.'

"'Oh, yes! in the very thick of it, and I'll run down the whole line of pigs, and scream murder at the top of my voice.'

"'Done with you, Major,' answered Nick, 'and bad luck to the word I'll ever breathe in court against you!' and off the little fellow strutted, a good six inches nearer the moon than he had been before.

"Next Thursday was the fair, and out he comes in a bottle-green coat, with brass buttons, top-boots and buckskins, and a tremendous great whip under his arm, marching up and down the pig market, looking as savage as a Tartar, and every now and then flanking up a boneen with the long lash, as if to try its weight.

"'Why Nick!' said his friends, 'what a buck you have made of yourself, to-day; and what a fine corrector you've got there.'

"'Yes,' says he, in an off-hand manner, 'I'm waiting for old Major Delaney, the murdering villain! *I'll cut a bit out of him about the same size as the piece*

of ear that I have lost, or maybe just a little taste bigger, to cover the expenses ! Bother your lawyers, I say ! I'll be my own judge, and jury too, and I'll teach him to mind his manners a deal better for the future, I'll promise you.'

" ' Pooh ! man alive ! ' said the bystanders, ' you'll never dare to look at him, if he comes your way. He's the fiercest old devil in all Ireland, and would storm purgatory if the general sent him orders to do it ; and as for Cerberus, that the Romans used to talk about, he'd ram one of his heads down the throat of another, and clap a red-hot lump into the jaws of the third, in a brace of shakes.'

" ' You'll see all about that,' says Nick, ' for here he comes ; ' and, sure enough, as soon as the Major came up, he went in at him like a tiger, and cut away into his legs with his whip, as if he meant to keep his word. Off went the Major, as he had promised, down the pig market, yelling like a madman, and after him raced Nick, with the whip, slashing away right and left, so that it was a pleasure to see him, until at last he fell over a pig, and squashed his nose, which ended his satisfaction, as gentlemen call shooting one another. Next day, all proceedings were dropped against Major Delaney, for Nick refused to give any more evidence upon the matter, and a week after, he was seen to shake hands with his late enemy, and was heard to say, with a chuckle—' That a real man never loves a fellow so well as after he has had a little taste of a fight with him.'

" The folks were all amazed at the white feather being shown by such a fire-eater as the tough old soldier, but were obliged to put up with the only explanation he would give, which was this—' Poor little old scarecrow ! it amused him and didn't hurt me, so it would have been cruel to have grudged him

a little piece of innocent diversion in return for his ear: not that I am always in the same humour ;' and there was something in the way in which he said the last words, that somehow or other effectually prevented any one from trying in future when these extraordinary fits of good temper were on him.


"So you see, miss, that it is not always safe to give advice, for fear of putting mischief into people's heads, instead of keeping it out, and I am almost afraid that this will be the case with the gentleman in my paper, and that he will have done harm to Mr. Darcy, instead of preserving him from it, as he intended."

"Well, Kathleen, if he does, all I can say is, that I devoutly hope he may be treated like the Major in your story, but to much better purpose ; for, after all, a good stout whip is the only effectual mode of argument with these degraded wretches, who first create a depraved taste, and then feed it with all kinds of base calumnies ; since an appeal to their honour or good-feeling is utterly lost upon such miserable creatures, and a gaol is only too merciful an exchange for the squalid, vicious penury, in which the bulk of these firebrands spend their lives."

And Florence, with a look of scorn, tossed the paper to her maid, and joined her father, who was awaiting her in the hall.

I have translated Kathleen's story, for the most part, from the racy language in which she told it to her mistress, into the vulgar tongue, not from any dislike or contempt for the Milesian, and still less from any vain idea that it would gain by the exchange, for my version is a miserably tame affair in comparison to hers, but for a reason very similar to that which induced the illustrious Johnson to favour *the world with such a whimsically novel definition*

of a horse's fetlock, viz., "Ignorance, ma'am, sheer ignorance!" the real truth of the matter being, that I am by no means learned in Irish idioms, and if I were, I could not spell them, even though the liberation of my country from a Yellow ministry were the prize of my erudition.



CHAPTER IX.

"ENGLAND EXPECTS EVERY MAN WILL DO HIS DUTY."

"So I understand from Leila that Mr. Darcy is expected at the Priory to-day," said Mr. Montgomery to his daughter, as they were on their way to the dinner party that was to precede the birth-night ball in the evening. "I was very glad to hear it, for after we had once got him in the humour to stand for the borough, it would have been extremely vexatious if he had taken it into his head to change his mind after all; for these boys are so fanciful that one is never safe of them. I think we must sound him on the subject of his address; for when that is once out he is more compromised to his intention than we could reasonably expect him to be at present; and I should think it would not be a bad plan if you were to drop him a hint about the disappointment that it would be to the whole neighbourhood if he did not come forward, and the fine opportunity which is now offered him of putting himself at once, though so young a man, in a high position among the county families, and so on; for you women understand by nature what we men only learn artificially, and even then only clumsily, compared to your sex, viz., the art of winding people round your little finger, as the saying goes, and playing upon their weakest point; and we cannot lose him, that is clear enough; at *least we should have trouble enough to fill his place, if we do.*"

"My dear papa!" replied Florence, merrily, "your compliment to the deceitful craft of my sex is enough to spur up even the least ambitious of women to exert herself to deserve it, though her heart were not really in the cause, which mine is, for everything about me is bright blue, except my stockings and my religion."

"Your religion!" said the puzzled father; "what, have they introduced colours in the squabbles of the clergy, then?"

"Not exactly, my dear father, though I dare say they soon will: but there is a set of religionists usually styled Blue Lights I believe, of whom your friend, Mr. Dwight, is a luminous example, to which I most assuredly do not belong; though I was born in that pious country where the only recreation considered decent upon Sunday is to lock your door, and drown alike your *ennui* and your senses in copious libations of whiskey and water!"

"My sweet girl!" quoth the old gentleman with a rather ceremonious politeness, considering the relationship which existed between them, "it is very illiberal to make jests upon the religious opinions of any one, and very dangerous besides when those opinions are shared by a very influential body of men in the circle in which you move; and I must, therefore, beg of you not to allow your high spirits to betray you into saying anything to hurt the feelings of those with whom you are thrown in continual contact."

"Especially if they possess any influence in the borough, I suppose, papa," retorted the young lady, roguishly; "but be not afraid! for I not only abstain most cautiously from offending others by my intolerance, but strive to bear theirs with patience, for I think you must allow, that if the same mode of handling a subject be equally admissable to both parties, I,

and those of similar opinions to myself have a perfect right to laugh in a good-natured way at those who are so bitterly hostile to us."

"You inexperienced girls do not comprehend political necessities," responded the oracular parent; "but I am sure that I have not the slightest wish to lecture you. All I wish of you is to lend your aid in keeping our young friend and champion up to his promise, and to give no offence by your raillery to a party who just now most especially require conciliating as much as possible."

"I am afraid that I am going to vex you very much by what I am about to say," murmured Florence, hesitatingly, "but I cannot help doing so, and I am sure you are too kind and just to blame me for following the dictates of my own conscience. The fact is," she continued, in a firmer and more distinct voice, "that I can have nothing more to do with persuading Mr. Darcy to contest the borough; for I think it is extremely unkind towards him to plunge him into all the petty brawls and miserable trickery of this pseudo-patriotic struggle for political influence; and I sincerely hope he has changed his mind, and will refuse to come forward."

Had not the darkness prevented Florence from seeing the face of her father, as she thus expressed herself, it is not improbable that she would have been too much struck with the utter amazement depicted on it to have proceeded any further; as it was, his look of almost ludicrous bewilderment was lost upon her, so she continued her explanation, warming into her subject as she brought it to a crisis, and gaining confidence from her perfect conviction of the honesty of her motives.

"Had he been merely a riotous young Cantab, full of *boyish glee*, and rather enjoying the bustle and ex-

citement of a contested election for its own sake, without any force of character, as most very young men are, and actually in want of a little experience in real life to mould into some shape his crude ideas of society, I should not have minded so very much the task of undertaking his education for the good of the cause; or if he had been a stirring and ambitious young man, sincerely anxious to make a figure in public life, I might perhaps have cordially sympathized with his struggle to plant his foot upon the ladder which leads to political fame; but as it is, I do not wish to bear any part in taking from his natural sphere a young man of high family, considerable wealth, and refined tastes, who may so easily, and so peaceably, satisfy all the real inclinations of his mind, without embarking upon the stormy sea of politics to which you are now so ruthlessly dooming him."

"And is this the way," returned her father in a tone of vexation, "in which you carry out all your high-minded, chivalrous notions of devotion to your country, and the duty of preferring an active and energetic life to mere ignoble ease, to say nothing of still more romantic sentiments, with which you used to be so fond of favouring me, whenever my cold experience was unable to keep pace with your soaring theories? A rather astonishing change must have come over you, Florence, that you now advocate so pathetically the very life you then despised more bitterly than its faults deserved."

"Nay! that is hardly fair, papa! for I honour as much as any one a lofty ambition, nor have I lost one spark of my sympathy for those to whom the love of their country is as the breath of life! but can we call a seat in Parliament an object of high ambition, or confound the narrow-minded, self-interested, vulgar scramble for place and power, which bounds in these

days the visions of most statesmen, with the gallant, soul-inspiring warfare of the true patriot, burning to rid his native soil of foreign usurpation?"

"I do not say, Florence," replied Mr. Montgomery, "that a seat in the House is any longer what it was in my younger days, nor do I pretend to call it an object of ambition in any other sense than that in which the post of toil and danger is such to a young and high-spirited soldier; moreover, far be it from me to encourage any one in Mr. Darcy's position to fix all his happiness on the attainment of place and power; but at the same time, I do maintain this, that it is no such mighty sacrifice on his part to give such aid as lies in the power of his property, his talents, and his personal interest to render to the good cause of keeping together in the councils of the state a body of men who are, by birth, education, and principles, above the vulgar pandering to every new vagary of the sovereign mob, and who can at any rate give the people time to think before a specious and dazzling fallacy be accepted as a brilliant truth, and steps be taken which can never be retraced, without any calm and dispassionate discussion of their merits having ever been given to them."

"But is there no rising man of our own party," persisted Florence, "whom you could select as the champion of our cause in the borough instead of this gay, light-hearted child of ease and refinement? Is it not better to put forward some one to whom the seat may be a stepping-stone to his darling ambition; and who will go hand in hand with you all the more heartily that his interests are personally, as well as publicly, the same as your own? There is no lack of funds, nay! on that subject I cheerfully agree that Mr. Darcy is bound to assist you with all his power! there can be no dearth of such men! where then lies *the insuperable difficulty?*"

"Listen to me, Florence," said Mr. Montgomery, gravely, "you are my only child, and have been to me more even as a son than as a daughter; for all your education has been personally superintended by me, and you know and share all my ideas, and all my opinions, except in the one particular of what you are pleased to call your Primitive and Apostolic Faith. Nay, do not interrupt me—I am not about to speak disrespectfully of it, so fruitful as I confess it to be of the very ablest and most earnest men in the church to which you belong. I say, that you, my daughter, are peculiarly the child of my mind as well as of my heart, and as you have broached this subject, I will do my best to explain to your entire satisfaction what I mean. You ask me why I desire to bring forward Mr. Darcy, instead of some young aspirant after public fame, whose interest as well as conviction it may be to advance our cause with all his heart and all his eloquence; I will tell you.

"It has been the curse of our party now for many a long year to be served by these free-lances of political strife, these interested champions, and whenever we have trusted them we have invariably been betrayed. It is time now that we chose our leaders from among ourselves, and that the struggle should become one of principles and natures, not of mere party and intrigue. The men whom I now desire to see in Parliament as our representatives are what I will venture to call 'the typical gentlemen,' by which expression I mean fair specimens of their class in everything—language, manners, sentiments, and principles, nay, prejudices and foibles included, if you will; in a word, I want the nation to understand what we really are, without either favour or disparagement, when we speak out our honest convictions, as freely as we do around our own hearths; and by this fair trial of our merits as a class, I, for

one, am content to stand or fall. Now I can clearly see that Darcy will make an excellent member of this kind ; his frank, free-spoken manner ; his evident talents ; his wonderful choice of language ; his bold and fearless contempt for all the little trickeries of casuistry, and evident desire to come fairly and honestly to the real question at issue, will all tend to render him popular, if not with the House itself, (for who cares three barley-straws about that?) at least with the bulk of the earnest and sincere men, who are far more numerous in England than the demagogues imagine ; while at the same time he remains in every sentiment and habit, the unmistakeable country gentleman, and can by no one be regarded either as a hungry place-hunter, or the enterprising cadet of a noble house, anxious to billet him on the country in lieu of providing for him themselves.

“ And do you think, with all your chivalrous ideas on the subject, that it is a mean distinction to be a man to raise the prestige of his whole class, not by the exercise of gigantic wealth or unscrupulous intrigue, but by promulgating sentiments of such sound honour and high principle that all good men must applaud, and every thinking mind involuntarily exclaim ‘ The body from which such a speaker comes, to which it is his proudest boast to belong, cannot be the inert mass of passive obstruction to all advancement which we have heard it called ; if these are the real sentiments of the higher classes, how shamefully have they hitherto been maligned to us ! ’ This ministry cannot stand long—upon that every one is agreed ; then will come a struggle, not, as heretofore, between rival factions, but between two great principles ; on the one side mob-government, on the other a moderate and reasonable aristocracy, anxious to give a welcome to all sterling talent if accompanied by honesty of

purpose and sincere devotion to the permanent interests of the state, but rigidly refusing to follow a multitude to do evil.

“In this struggle I wish Mr. Darcy to play his part; and if it be any comfort to your chivalry to know that I clearly foresee, that so very far from leading to any rewards of vulgar ambition, his joining us at present is a mere linking himself to a movement whose time is not yet come; be assured of this, that our party must very speedily be again driven out of office, in consequence of the very loftiness of the task which it is undertaking, and that all we hope for, even if we do ere long obtain the reins of government, is to sow the seeds of an increased respect for our sentiments, which may in due time spring up and bear good fruit of order and political honesty. Once more, I repeat, the more fearlessly Mr. Darcy acts and speaks, the better; and if you still think it unworthy of an English gentleman to publish his opinions upon the most weighty matters, in the very manner in which they are the most likely to have due attention given to them, or do honestly believe the public service to be a degradation, rather than an honour, I absolve you heartily from all participation in my endeavours to induce this promising young man to embrace what I, for one, consider a most praiseworthy career. All I then ask of you is not to say anything that may actually deter him from pursuing his present intention, by the use of those arguments which with very young men are apt to obtain, when coming from a lady, a rather unfair preponderance over the more solid reasonings of his own sex. But here we are, close upon the Priory gates, so I can say no more.”

“I am quite convinced, my dear father,” said Florence, thoughtfully, “and far be it from me to hold

up to ridicule the anxiety of any noble heart to be of some practical use ; or to extol the claims of the Fine Arts or Belles Lettres to our admiration over the more sterling qualities of public activity, or disinterested devotion to the good of our country at large."

The carriage here rolled up to the hall-door of the Priory, and the conversation between father and daughter came to an end.



CHAPTER X.

THE SKELETON OF THE FEAST.

THE dinner at the Priory was the severest trial that the patience of Philip Darcy had ever yet undergone, for he had now to bear the brunt of the practical details of the impending contest, uncheered by the more romantic visions which had on the previous occasion decked with fallacious splendour his entrapment into bondage. Instead of the lively Florence, who was handed off by a captain of dragoons, he was delivered up into the ravenous clutches of a gaunt damsel of fifty-two, who rejoiced in the high-sounding appellation of Miss Theodosia O'Flaherty, and who possessed uncounted acres, and an unlimited supply of tenants in the far west of Ireland, but whose rents were also uncounted, for the less satisfactory reason of there being none to count. However, what was lost in money was gained in grandeur, for she really could boast of her hundreds of dependents who were honestly attached to her; and as she had some little funded property, which had been left her by a base-born Saxon, for whose memory she entertained a sovereign contempt, she managed to get on tolerably well. She patronized Colonel Mainwaring, who had married her younger sister, in a most condescending manner, being fully persuaded that her vast arrears of rent, though they never could by any possibility be paid, entitled her to the position of a very wealthy and influential member of the family, and paid him a visit once a year, which generally lasted for six weeks, or a couple

of months, during the whole of which time, every one was expected to be put out of his way to suit her fancies, be they never so ridiculous; and the good-natured willingness with which the Colonel submitted to her eccentricities, was always put down by her to a due appreciation of her exalted position in society and boundless wealth.

As a matter of course, she was a rigid member of the Romish Church, and paid most extravagant respect to the priests of her neighbourhood, as long at least as they were prudent enough to abstain from making their requisitions clash with her will and pleasure; but as for one refractory gentleman, who chose to unite practice with precept in the matter of fastings and penances, to a greater extent than suited Miss Dosy's ideas of propriety, she soon put an extinguisher upon him, by stoutly denying that he had ever been ordained at all, and devoutly praying that the abominable fraud by which he had foisted himself upon the bishop might speedily be detected and punished; after which, the poor man found himself in such bad odour amongst Miss O'Flaherty's adherents, that he suddenly took his departure one moonlight night, and his place knew him no more.

For the rest, she was an excellent woman at heart, kind and generous to the poor, just in her dealings, and thoroughly honest and truthful in all her actions; so that with all her many strange oddities, there were many worse women to be met with in every society than old Miss O'Flaherty, bore as she now was to poor Phil, whose attention wandered fearfully from her long rigmarole stories of the glories of her ancestral house to the other end of the table, where the man of war was laying close siege to Florence.

To add to the sorrows of that pitiable youth, he *discovered* that no sooner would the ladies quit the

room, than a strong-minded gentleman, who superintended the politico-religious department of his proposed committee, was steadfastly purposed to sound him upon the subject of sundry polemical questions, most artistically contrived to sow dissension in any camp, however united before, and to extract from him, if possible, the most explicit pledges, to carry out to the very last bristle upon the tail of the whole hog the Protestant institutions of Great Britain. Of this hero Phil had the liveliest conceivable horror, and gloomily did he ponder over the safest mode of eluding a danger from which it was utterly impossible to escape receiving injury if once fairly met, and while Miss O'Flaherty was edifying him with legends of the departed grandeur of her family, his anxious soul was rapidly dividing itself, as Virgil has it, now here, now there, in search of that truest of all wisdom, a moderate and conciliatory policy.

Heartily did he long for one moment's consultation with the fair guide he had selected as the pole-star of his destiny, not only to inquire a little how this subject was regarded by the bulk of his constituency, but also (I blush for my hero as I record it), to make quite sure of not hurting her particular prejudices by any unguarded speech, however unlucky he might be as a general question, and much would he have given to know under what banner she marched upon this subject; for though it was not in Philip Darcy to have actually belied his own opinions to have gained favour even there, yet I fear that his opposition to her sentiments might have been unduly weak, had he been conscientiously compelled to decide against her. But fortunate for him, in good truth, little as he knew it, was the chance that separated him from the counsels he sought; for if his neighbour of the preceding week *had been again by his side, and if he again had drunk*

in with thirsting ears the oracles which fell from those rosy lips, Philip Darey might as well have stood for Manchester as Midhampton, and the strong-minded gentleman would have handed him over to Satan, instead of proving, as he eventually did, his very staunchest ally in his canvass for the borough. At length, his deeply-pondering wits received an accidental enlightenment from one of those purely fortuitous remarks, which sometimes strike us as though they must be meant for the parables which we make of them ourselves.

"My dear lady," he heard Captain Devereux blandly remark to Florence, "the safest place, as well as the most creditable, to seize a bull is by his horns, always providing that you have pluck enough to catch boldly at him first."

These words rang in Darcy's ears with a significance for which he could hardly account, and set his mind at work upon the benefit of a bold and decided line of action in his present dilemma; and the more he thought of it, the more feasible it appeared, until his determination was finally quite fixed, to commence the explanation of his sentiments himself, and by volunteering the information desired by his supporters, rob his questioner of an excuse to linger upon a subject which had already received a sufficient amount of attention from him. This resolution he hastened to put into effect as soon as the ladies had quitted the room; and before his tormentor had time to arrange himself to open the case with all the pomp and ceremony befitting the occasion, Darcy was already upon his legs, and in full career of his voluntary exposition of his sentiments upon church affairs. Avoiding, with great dexterity, all opinion upon the minor shades of difference between the various bodies of the Protestant community, he plunged into a most undeniably hostile

philippic against the evil rule of the Romish priesthood over the uneducated masses, amongst whom their greatest influence lay, and contrived with profound skill, to make the matter at issue appear to be one, not as his questioner meant it to be, of various shades of opinion amongst those who nominally belonged to the same body, but of broad antagonism between the Church of Rome and the national faith ; and alluding to the bitter hatred with which the supporters of the party to which he belonged would be received by the priesthood in Ireland during the impending struggle, he concluded his address by an offer, if it should be considered at all expedient or advantageous to the cause, to give up his candidateship for Midhampton to some other fitting person, who should be supported by him with all his power, and himself come forward as the opponent of the domination of priestly misrule in the Irish county, in which Colonel Mainwaring possessed extensive estates and no little influence over a prosperous and contented tenantry, upon whose warm support he could depend, for making the contest at least something more than a mere show.

“ If, gentlemen,” said he, in conclusion, “ you have any use for a man not very easily frightened, to bring forward as the determined supporter of a ministry, against whom the whole power of the Romish Church will be most unscrupulously and unsparingly exercised, you may very safely count upon me, as my desire is rather to advance the good cause, than to aggrandize myself.”

Now, I beg to say, that Philip Darcy in making this promise was no hypocrite, and had no intention of declining to keep his word if he were called upon to undertake this new crusade, for he had now thoroughly imbibed the spirit of his party, and was sincerely anxious to serve it, wherever and in whatsoever manner

it might require his support ; but, on the other hand, to aver that he wished to make the exchange, would be saying too much for his preference of the most unpleasant seat of war that the whole strife afforded, so that it was with heartfelt satisfaction that he heard Mr. Dwight's expressions of congratulation, that the constitutional Blue committee had met with the good fortune of securing a candidate whose sentiments did him such honour. As for losing him, that was out of the question, and his (the speaker's) greatest wish was, that Mr. Darcy might continue to represent their town, until he was translated to the Upper House, for his services to religion and morality at large, or if his merits remained for ever unacknowledged by such rewards, until he went to his grave, full of years and honours.

Several speeches followed, and sundry details as to the mode of conducting the canvass were discussed, but the critical point in the voyage of our friend was safely past, the sunken rocks happily avoided ; and nothing now awaited him but the ordinary exertions and perils of the passage, so that he was able to seek his room, to make a few little alterations in his dress for the evening ball, with a marvellously lightened heart, and to prepare for a grand attack upon Florence Montgomery, without having his attention distracted from that important object by any unpleasant forebodings of evil to come. Never had he felt in higher spirits, and yet more unlike the wild, adventurous student of former days. Never had he looked upon the quiet, every-day routine of a country life, with greater pleasure than now, as he sate by the window, gazing absently forth into the star-lit night, and weaving airy dreams of calm and useful prosperity, and of long happy years of placid enjoyment, rather than of *the gay excitement* in which he had so greatly revelled

heretofore. There were no brilliant reception rooms, or splendid tiers of opera boxes before his mental vision now; no madcap adventures of a romantic life had any attractions for him in his present mood, nor, despite of the pursuit in which he had been so lately engaged, did his thoughts wander to the crowded benches and stormy debates of the House of Commons. Nay, strange to say, the visions so inexpressibly soothing to him, had little relation to youthful associations at all, but were almost entirely engrossed by middle life, or even approaching age; and the prevailing impression they left behind, was rather—how blessed a thing it is to be honoured and respected on the brink of the grave, and to die happy, than how much enjoyment of life was still within the reach of his youth and wealth. And in these musings the gentle face of Florence shone continually forth, robbed indeed of its girlish beauty and freshness, but as he thought, purified and hallowed, rather than injured by the change, until he even fancied that she had never looked so lovely in any of his numerous heart-drawn portraits of her during the last few days, as when his ideal picture painted her as the aged, silver-haired wife, who clasped the hand of the fast dying man, in whom with a soft melancholy, actually pleasurable, he appeared to recognise himself.

“I might choose a worse pole-star, as Charlie says,” murmured he, and as he spoke he lifted up his eyes, as if in half-unconscious search of the star he mentioned, but started with surprise and undefined apprehension, or superetition, to call it by a rougher name, as he beheld that one part of the heavens shrouded by a densely black cloud, while all around appeared bright and clear in all the magnificence of a frosty winter’s night.

He tried to laugh off the impression; he hummed

to himself snatches of merry songs ; he recalled Fortescue's ludicrous appearance when he surprised him at his studies at the Cock in Boots, and left no resource untried to turn the current of his gloomy thoughts, but it was all in vain ; the dispiriting omen still hung coldly and heavily on his breast, and with almost straining eyes he continued gazing into the sky, where the cloud still lingered like a funeral pall, as though his very life depended on the reappearance of the star, till a loud knocking at the door awoke him from his reverie, and brought him back to real life.

"Are you coming to-night at all, Philip ? or am I to sit out five dances running ? I have waited four already !" said the voice of Leila, through the key-hole, "but I won't refuse one more partner for your sake, that is certain ! so if you are not down in five minutes, I shall give a practical proof of having read old Rollin's dry history, and by dancing with young McLeod cause the throne of King Philip to be filled up by 'Alexander and his successors.'"

"I'll come in a moment, Lola !" said Darcy, rousing himself, and just as he left the window, the cloud suddenly parted, and forth shone his long-looked-for star, bright and tranquil as a tiny ball of silver. "May it be an omen !" said he, with a feeling of more relief than he would have readily confessed. "Now, Leila, I am ready, and Alexander McLeod shall find, like his Macedonian prototype, that when he comes to the throne which you apparently promise him in your heart, he will have something to do to eclipse the fame of his immediate predecessor."

So saying, he performed two or three most extraordinary demi-voltes, which certainly spoke well for *his activity*, and soundness of wind and limb, when, *taking his fair companion* by what he called "the nip

of her neck," i. e., encircling the back of it with his finger and thumb, he ran her down-stairs in this eccentric fashion, and made his appearance in the dancing-room, looking as demure as if he were perfectly incapable of such very riotous and improper behaviour.

The sets were already forming for the Lancers, which was a standard performance in the house of the good colonel, for the sake of old associations, when Leila returned with her truant cavalier, and hastened to take her place; and the music beginning almost immediately upon her reappearance, she had at first but little leisure to observe the wandering glances and extraordinary absence of manner of her partner, who seemed to be dancing in his sleep, so earnestly did he keep his eyes fixed on one corner of the room, with a kind of fascinated stare, as though he perceived some vision of no very agreeable kind, from which it was in vain to attempt to distract his attention. But when the pauses in the figures allowed her a little more time for observation, she was amazed to mark his altered manner, and inwardly wondering what could be the cause, and determined to ask him point blank the moment the dance was over, set her little wits to work in the meanwhile to decipher the reason, upon the same principle as we turn over a letter in an unknown hand, and examine the seal, post-mark, and every conceivable token whereby to guess at what we can immediately set beyond doubt by simply opening it.

At first, she thought that it might be some uneasiness at Florence's flirtation with Captain Devereux, but soon discovered that this could not be the case, as, in the first place, his eyes never wandered in her direction, but were intently fixed upon a perfectly different corner of the room; and, in the next, that *damsel was by no means engaged in so reprehensible*

an occupation as that before mentioned, but was talking to an exceedingly deaf old lady, through her ear-trumpet, about her subscription to a coal-club, of which the said Florence was the principal patroness, and was noticing Captain Devereux no more than that gallant warrior, deep in a rubber of whist, was watching her.

Her second idea was, that Philip was so electrified by her aunt's new Bird of Paradise head-dress, that his mind was rather wandering from sheer amazement, but then he would have got tired of staring long before now, besides which, his grave and troubled face forbade the idea that it was in any comical bewilderment that he was at present involved. It was evidently something very disagreeable, and she longed to solve the mystery; but nothing in the important corner could she behold, save two fox-hunting squires, watching their dancing daughters, and wishing themselves at home; her aunt aforesaid, who had collared the curate of an adjoining parish, and was knocking his heretical ideas out of him, as she fondly hoped, and a very meek, gentle little woman, who had lately settled near Midhampton as a German governess and music mistress, and whose husband was usually supposed to be addicted to such little practical jokes as lugging her downstairs by the hair, or pelting her about the house with a boot-jack, which he used as a kind of boomerang, inasmuch as the victim had to bring it back again whenever it was thrown at her head.

"It can't be little Mrs. Krummacher, surely," thought Leila; "and yet it certainly looks rather like it, for she is as crimson as a peony, and is staring at him too; and I do declare that the tears are coming into her eyes. Oh, Phil, my sweet friend! but you *shall be rarely* plagued for this! No, it can't be,

either, for I don't believe she ever was in England before she married ! Well, but then Phil has been so much abroad ! perhaps it is after all. What a pasty-faced, dowdy creature she is, glowering at us with her watery eyes, the colour of a washed-out school-room breakfast-plate !" and Leila's own magnificent black ones began to sparkle with incipient dislike of her darling favourite of the previous six months.

Not that our pretty friend had been committing the folly of forming a premature affection for Philip Darcy, since of this silly misconstruction of his brotherly kindness to her she was quite innocent, but that she possessed, in no ordinary degree, that vague jealousy of being neglected by any one whom she liked, which is by no means uncommon in girls of her age ; and as she had quite made up her mind to be Phil's especial pet during this identical evening, and to add to the flowers of her birth-night coronal the glory of monopolizing the lion of the party, she naturally felt somewhat humbled and mortified at this lame and impotent conclusion to her ambitious hopes.

Besides which, she now remembered to have heard some kind of indistinct report, that Darcy had been very nearly entrapped into an extremely imprudent marriage, when little more than a boy, and that the object of his infatuation was a foreigner ; wherefore her suspicions began to fall more and more on the unlucky little German, whose face grew momentarily more and more sickly, whose eyes faded into a lighter blue, and whose feet waxed larger, until they threatened to cover the whole floor (Leila, as became a damsel of Andalusian symmetry in that respect, detested enormous feet), as the conviction of her identity with the man-hunting minx of old time became *more firmly settled*, as a thing past all reasonable *doubt*, in the impetuous mind of her examiner.

The set at length came to an end, and Leila professing to have a great desire for some lemonade, dragged her partner into the breakfast-room, as if in search of the refreshment in question, but no sooner had she got him all to herself, than she came to a dead stop, and forgetting her thirst, seized him by the arm with both hands, and demanded, with the determined air of a highwayman—

“Whom have you been staring at all the time we were dancing, Phil? You never paid me the least attention; and you quite murdered our whole set by the atrociously wooden way in which you moved. I only wish you could have seen yourself in the glass, setting to Mary Cunningham, like one of those jointed dolls which are pulled by strings! You would be prettily ashamed of yourself, I promise you. What is the matter?”

“Matter enough, my dear; the cat trod on my foot!” replied Philip, screwing up a laugh. “I did not know that I was enacting Macbeth, at that interesting conjuncture when the ghost of Banquo appeared at his supper-table as vice-president, and probably volunteered a song, only Shakespeare has forgotten to record it.”

“Now, it is no use your trying to turn it off in that way, Philip, for I am sure there was something to annoy you. Do tell little Lola, there’s an old darling! and I’ll never mention it to any one, I won’t indeed; but I should so like to have a secret, quite a nice one, you know, very melancholy, and of dreadful importance, and so on.”

Philip shook his head. “I was only struck with the strange likeness of one of your friends to a lady whom I knew some years ago, and I dare say I stared more than was quite polite; but I hope nobody else saw it, *for it must have appeared very ill-bred.*”

Leila was half-convinced at first, or at any rate very much shaken in her opinion; but then returned to her mind the suspicious fact that the lady herself had appeared to be as much struck with the likeness as Philip himself, which was rather too much to be assigned to an accidental coincidence; so she laid no stress upon this shabby attempt at an explanation, but pursued her original intention of coaxing him out of the secret, if possible, and if she could not manage that, to set all her wits to work to find it out for herself.

"I must and will know all about it," said she, pettishly, "if it give me never so much trouble; and it is a very cleverly concealed thing indeed, my dear Phil, that lies hid very long from the search of a woman, when she once makes up her mind to find it out; but it is very unkind of you not to tell me, for I always tell you everything, and I will be as silent as the Speaker of the House of Commons, who is so called, according to papa, because he is the only man who is not at liberty to hold forth as much as he likes, whether he understands the subject he is talking about or not; but, as I was saying, I will be quite silent, and perhaps I might be of some use to you too. But if you won't, you won't, I suppose! nevertheless, I will lay you a little wager that I know all about it by this day month."

Darcy was profoundly vexed at this speech, for he fully appreciated the inconveniences which might arise from Leila's curiosity, and he knew her well enough to feel convinced that she would leave no stone unturned to fulfil her threat; at the same time, that he had no inclination to make a confidante of a flighty, romantic girl of fifteen, especially in a matter, the exact merits of which were a little difficult of explanation, except to one perfectly acquainted with the

world, embracing, as it did, many considerations, the full weight of which would be very imperfectly comprehended by the unworldly nature of his little friend.

"Will you wait patiently for the secret until the end of the month you mentioned," said he, "instead of spending it in trying to find out what will be a terrible mare's-nest when you have got it? If you will, I will promise either to tell you at the end of that time, or to give you free leave to hunt about after it as much as ever you choose, without offending me. But at present, if we are to continue friends, you must be no spy upon my movements."

I should blush to record the answer which Leila, in a most unblushing manner, made to this appeal; suffice it to say, that it was not confined to words, even as far as audible acquiescence in his request was concerned, as with a face radiant with childish joyousness, she accompanied her cavalier back into the ball-room, and handed him over to Florence, while she herself commenced her practical study of "Alexander and his successors."

CHAPTER XI.

THE VIOLET DECLARES WAR UPON THE JONQUIL.

“So you are really going to settle amongst us, and fit up the old Hall in all its former magnificence,” said Florence to her partner, Philip Darcy, as they paraded up and down after the quadrille, to which his bouquet had served as a pretext for engaging her so long beforehand. “I am really very glad that the poor old place is to be restored at last, for it has been gradually falling into decay for upwards of a century, and it seems a pity that such a very fine building should be entirely lost to the county. But now I suppose it will recover all its original beauty; for we hear most wonderful accounts of the architects, masons, and carpenters, who are to be employed on the repairs; nay, a rumour has gone forth that Sir Rupert’s banquetting hall is to be converted into a library, from whence we venture to predict a handsome collection of books, and that a large picture-gallery is in contemplation in the north wing of the house, to which Leila has super-added a museum of curiosities; but this, I presume, is a mere phantom of a lively imagination, produced most probably by her own attachment to old coins, snails from the Great Wall of China, and so on, not forgetting a stirrup of John Sobieski, presented to her by a Pole, whose name no reasonable person would even wish to be able to pronounce, and a missal bound in human skin, in both of which agreeable relics she takes great delight, and believes most unhesitatingly in their genuineness.”

“To tell the truth, Miss Montgomery,” replied Darcy, with a smile, “although the confession

will rather damage my character for sanity in your eyes, the account you have heard from Leila regarding my collection of curiosities and relics is perfectly correct; for I am very fond of such memorials, when I have sufficient reason to believe them to be genuinely connected with the associations which they are intended to recall, and as I have travelled a great deal in out of the way countries, and seen a good many strange places and events, by which means I have been enabled to collect a very tolerable quantity of curiosities with my own hands, I hold them in considerable regard as tokens of the different vicissitudes through which the countries to which they belong have passed, are passing still, and very probably may yet pass during my life-time, for I think I may venture to include the future, since I devoutly hope that many things characteristic of the present may ere long be simply relics of a tribulation gone by, never to return; and as for Leila's stirrup, permit me to remark that you are on this occasion the victim of a lively imagination, since the Pole of whom you speak is no Pole at all, but a Daco-Roman of the Banat, or what you would call a Hungarian, and his name so far from being as impracticable as you imagine, is a particularly easy one to pronounce, for even your lips might be brought to compass sounds no more barbarous and rough than Marcellus Aurantius."

"Well! I am sure that there was something much more unearthly upon the label," said Florence, merrily, "four syllables, at least, with a preponderance of consonants in each word, which it makes my blood run cold to recall to memory. But as you appear to know all about him, I will not pretend to contradict you."

"I rather suspect, lady fair, that you mistook his native territorial title for his name, at which mistake I *feel but little surprise*; but however that may be, he is

certainly called, as I told you, Marcellus Aurantius, although it is not improbable that Leila has complimentarily designated him by the appellation by which he is known amongst his own people, which signifies neither more or less than simply 'He who dwelleth at——.' He is a very chivalrous, noble fellow, I can assure you, and if he comes to visit me, which is far from unlikely, you must take care of your heart."

"I think, Mr. Darcy, it would have been more gallant to have entertained a wholesome fear for the peace of mind of your friend, instead of being so considerate of mine! but you men are in reality a good deal vainer than women, and live in a constant apprehension of being too attractive. So we are positively to be regaled with a museum, and have our education in antiquities and archæology perfected by what the inspectors of public schools would call object lessons. Are you and Leila then going to be the lecturers?"

"Certainly, if you will attend our course of study; but just at present I want your counsels upon things essentially modern in their nature. I was very nearly falling a victim this evening to a Mr. Dwight, who appears to be a kind of Exeter Hall prophet, and I should be glad to know how the neighbourhood is disposed upon the religious topics of the day, in order to avoid, as much as possible, such subjects as may cause dissensions, for I fancy that the gentleman I have just mentioned will very soon make another descent upon me, and it is as well to be prepared."

"I can give you no comfort there," said Florence, musingly; "the man is quite mad upon what he considers the dangers which environ the Protestant faith, from the never-ceasing ravening of the Romish wolf, and the plain fact is, that it is utterly impossible to go far enough to satisfy him, without turning yourself

into a species of Howling Dervish ; and yet to offend his prejudices is, to one of your party, almost certain destruction, for he is, politically speaking, as useful and valuable a man as, viewed in a religious light, he is a contemptible fanatic and dreamer of dreams. I know not what advice to give."

"I managed to mollify him this evening," resumed Phil, "by a violent onslaught on the Romish priesthood, but what sacrifice will suffice on the next occasion I am at a loss to imagine, for I cannot and will not go all his lengths, come what may ; the only thing that I can think of is to draw out old Miss O'Flaherty on the subject of her pet priests when Mr. Dwight happens to be present, and by taking the immaculately Protestant side against them, which I can conscientiously do, stop this tiresome gentleman's mouth on minor topics."

"But can you do this without going against your own convictions," said Florence, earnestly, "or attaining your end by an unworthy subserviency to illiberal and unjust prejudices, for I am sure that you would not wish to owe your success to any stratagem for which you would blush hereafter ? Pardon me, Mr. Darcy, if I take a strange liberty in speaking thus ; but for the sake of your honour and self-respect, do not be led into the error of thinking that ends justify means, and that it does not signify through what miry roads you proceed to power, provided that you mean to use that power aright. Better take no part whatever in public affairs than sacrifice your sense of what is honest and true to mere expediency, and this, believe me, is the grand prevailing distinction between the conflicting parties of the day, between the Violet and the Jonquil, that the one desires to follow that which is good and sound, independently of its selfish policy, the other regards

nothing but what is popular, and conclusive to the retention of office. Between these two, what honourable mind can hesitate one instant?" And Florence, as if suddenly awakening to a sense of her too manifest interest in her subject, abruptly paused, with a glow of shame upon her expressive features, which gave them to the enamoured eyes of poor Phil a yet greater charm and attraction.

"You speak as an English maiden ought to speak," said he, admiringly, "and if all ladies were as good counsellors as you it would indeed be a happy thing for my countrymen, that they are so proverbially influenced by the opinions of your sex. But I can assure you, Miss Montgomery, that on this occasion your kind warnings were not needed to insure my perfect acquiescence in the sentiments which you have just broached, for I myself hold it in the highest degree unworthy of a man of honour to derive any personal advantage to himself from an unjust concession to injurious principles, or calumnies, against the adversaries of his opinions or interests. Nothing can be farther from my intentions than to cast any unfair imputations upon a faith, held in all ages by so many excellent and pure-hearted men; but as to the Irish priesthood themselves, and the shameless impositions which they practise upon their confiding flock, the profligacy which they hide under a cloak of sanctity, and the violence, fraud, and falsehood they encourage in all directions to suit their own ends, I have no scruple in inveighing against them to Mr. Dwight's full content, and I think that in so doing, I am no very bad friend to the very religion which they profess; for terrible indeed is the mass of obloquy heaped upon all its adherents, which belongs in justice to the priesthood, and to it alone."

Florence's face brightened up at this explanation. "I was sure," said she, "that you could not have

meant to curry favour with your supporters in such a shabby manner as pretending to sympathise with that most monstrous libel upon religious toleration which finds so much favour in the eyes of Mr. Dwight; and as to the persons you mention, I am afraid there is abundance to be said about them, without being compelled to resort to the slightest exaggeration."

"There is indeed," said Phil, laughing, "and I will confine myself most scrupulously to their lives and conduct, and never touch upon matters of doctrine: will that content you, fair monitress?"

His companion smiled assent, and was turning the subject into another channel, by making inquiries into the travels of which he had lately spoken, when suddenly his indirect compact with Jem Farren flashed across his mind, and he hastened to unbosom to his pretty confessor his late aberration from the rules of open warfare.

"It was carelessly done," said he, in an apologetic tone, "and I really had never thought very seriously about the matter; you good people fairly teased me into coming forward, and of all my captors, you, fair lady, had the most blame to answer for, in taking me away from my peaceful obscurity to plunge me into the bustle and excitement of what will evidently prove a very sharp contest. All I thought of at first was, how to gain my seat; at any rate I was contented to abstain from any very glaring exercise of illegal influence. You know, Miss Montgomery, how these things are looked upon practically, if not openly, amongst almost all men. Really, I think I was no worse than others! so don't despise me. But now I am quite convinced that I was very much to blame. I would rather cut off my hand than have anything to do with bribery, however indirect. I will write to that rascal, Farren, before I even go to bed, and pay him my stupid wager,

and let him off his bargain. I will indeed ! and then I hope you will allow that I am sincere in my professions of vexation at what I was foolish enough to do, before I had sufficiently considered what I was about."

Into what tenderer style of address the gallant Philip might have glided by degrees from this rather dangerous point it is difficult to say; but at this conjuncture, Captain Devereux appeared to claim the hand of Florence for the next dance, and the *tête-à-tête* was thus broken up, just as it promised to become somewhat critical in its results. Phil followed his late companion with his eyes, until she disappeared with her partner in the maze of the waltzers, and was then about to subside into a kind of doldrum against the doorway, when he was aroused by a violent drag at his coat-tails, and turning round to discover his assailant, received the following objurgation from the justly exasperated Leila.

"How stupid you are growing, Phil ! do dance, or talk to the old people, or amuse the children, or do something for your living. You promised me to come down and be the life of my party, instead of which, you go moping about like a sick monkey, and neglecting me in a most loathsome manner. Do bestir yourself, and be of some use. Remember the good old song, 'It is well to be off with the old love, before you are on with the new.' Here you go running about after Floss, whom you have known rather less than a fortnight, and slighting me, who have been your own little pet for years, long before she was born, or....." "thought of," Leila would have added, but before the words were out of her mouth, she was whirled into the dance by Phil at a most furious pace, to the astonishment of a half-fledged cornet, who had been engaged to her for a waltz, for a month at the very least, and who, walking in the paths of error as to her real age,

to which she had lent a year or two, to use her own quaint expression, to be repaid with interest when she had more to spare, was getting up quite a sentiment for the pretty little creature, who seemed to have forgotten, not only his claims to her hand, but his very existence, as with twinkling feet she flew round the room, in acceptance of the practical apology thus offered by Darcy for his previous neglect. Suddenly the music stopped, and the breathless waltzers were brought to an unexpected halt in their rapid gyrations. They gazed about them in search of the cause of the interruption to their amusement, and were then aware of the presence of the good colonel himself at the top of the room, with a paper in his hand, which appeared to be a telegraphic message, and which he was evidently purposed to read out to the assembled company without delay. Its contents were as follows:—
“Ministers have resigned—cause unknown—Lord Knowsley is with the Queen!”

Then burst forth a buzz of joyous voices, and the whole room was full of faces, on which was depicted all the pleasure of hope long delayed, but come at last. The most casual observer could not have failed to notice the mixture of triumph and excitement on every countenance, and must have more than half suspected its cause, viz., that a struggle for which all had long panted was now about to commence, and that whether they won or lost, they were at least destined to have a fair fight for it. But amongst this rejoicing throng there was one person whose face wore an expression of doubt rather than satisfaction at the news thus published, and that was Mr. Montgomery, who, drawing Darcy aside, said with a significant smile—

“The ministers have read the fables of our old friend *Æsop* to some purpose, I think, and are hoping to ride *out the storm* by bending to it, well knowing that it

would have uprooted them had they attempted to face it. Look you, Darcy ! these fellows will be in office again, ere three days be out, with a few trifling alterations in the cabinet, and will possibly outlive the year after all. Truly, these gentry have as many lives as cats, and it really seems as though the very fact of a ministry having no real animation in it, preserves to an unlimited duration the faint burlesque of vitality which it possesses. If to fall without a blow were to lose the battle, as it is among the champions of the ring, they would be easily dealt with enough ; as it is, there is no use in striking men who, at the very first apprehension of danger, throw themselves flat upon their faces, and then leap up again when the peril is past, not only safe, but positively triumphant."

Phil assented with a smile, and turned away from his exasperated mentor to a merry group assembled round the piano, where Florence had convened a party, to celebrate by an appropriate pæan, the discomfiture of the enemy ; and in a few minutes the whole room rang with a chorus of voices, performing in high glee the glorious old constitutional ballad, which deserves to be printed in gold, and set up in all the market places throughout the British isles :—

"Awa', Whigs, awa' ! awa', Whigs, awa' !
You're a' a pack of traitor loons,
You do no good at a'."

The dancing was for awhile broken up, the whole party being split into little knots, busily discussing the present crisis, with the importance of which all who were present, except the mere children, seemed thoroughly impressed ; and had it not been for the indefatigable exertions of Leila and her squire, Philip Darcy, and their wise precaution of hurrying on supper, *in order to make a little diversion, in favour of the*

younger and gayer part of the community, it is doubtful whether the ball would ever have recovered from the effects of this interruption.

But after the supper had been discussed, and the waltzers refreshed with champagne, accompanied by a most eloquent address from Leila, who insisted on returning thanks in person for her health having been drunk, the light-footed dancers returned to their revels with renewed spirit; and it was getting on towards daylight, though the depth of the winter was not yet passed, ere the band were called upon, to their intense relief, to strike up "Sir Roger de Coverley," as a signal that an end had now come to a ball, fraught with very grave consequences to more than one person there present.

"As I am a villain!" muttered Phil, as he jumped into bed, after carefully depositing in water a large red and white camellia, his affection for which was rather singular, as it had been grown in his own greenhouse, and so might have appeared a little uninteresting to him, "I don't believe Menie was there at all! and I never missed her."

CHAPTER XII.

OLD FRIENDS, BUT NEW FOES.

THE next morning, immediately after breakfast, Phil set out upon a visit to Menie Burton, of whose absence he had been so shamefully unobservant the night before. His self-reproach for his negligence, however, was considerably lessened, by learning from Leila that she had not been prevented from making her appearance by illness, but simply by her desire to keep her mother company, who was too anxious about Charles to be fit in her dutiful daughter's eyes to be left alone, and who seldom, if ever, went into company of any description.

Mrs. Burton was very unwilling to deprive the child of a little innocent amusement, such as that which now presented itself, and was urgent upon Menie that she should join the dancers, but the little woman was obstinate for once in her docile life, and quoting her mother's own words, "That it is a great mistake to throw obstacles in the way of young people desirous of doing their duty, even though the motive for declining the self-sacrifice may be an amiable wish to spare them pain," obtained a signal victory, and stayed at home to read to mamma until it was time to go to bed.

She certainly did think a good deal about the party as she lay awake in bed, watching the stars through the unshuttered window of her neat little room, and wondered whether Leila was looking her best or not, and whether Florence, dear, kind Florence, would

dance much with Mr. Darcy, so she began to think what a staunch, good friend Mr. Darcy had been to her brother; and then, strange child that she was, she got out of bed and knelt down by the side of it, to offer up a prayer for Charlie's unvarying noble-hearted supporter in the many little trials and privations of the life of a poor student, and prayed that he might always be a good man, and not only a rich and talented one, and that he might not be corrupted by the busy world in which he was now plunging himself, and finally, that if he ever wanted a friend, it might be done unto him in his need, even as he, in his prosperity and gaiety, had done unto another. And after once more resettling herself upon her pillow she fell asleep, and dreamed a childish, innocent romance of great things which she did for good, merry Philip Darcy, and dear, gentle, loving Floss.

So if she dressed herself next morning with more than usual care, and arranged her luxuriant dark hair in its very prettiest style, and chose her best-fitting muslin frock, and, in fact, made the most of herself in every way, because she took for granted that Mr. Darcy would come to call upon her, we will neither condemn her as frivolous beyond her years, nor still more unjustly suspect her of being a premature coquette, but simply believe of her, that she was anxious to make a good figure in the opinion of one whom she had been taught by the unbounded praises of her brother to look upon as a kind of phoenix; besides which, it must be allowed that her mother had so continually spoken of him, as some one quite out of the common run of men in generosity of disposition, that there is little wonder that Menie was so enthusiastic in her admiration.

But we will now leave her for a little time at her *morning lessons*, in the cheerful if not very spacious

room looking over the trim, well-kept garden, which she managed entirely herself, except an occasional day's digging; and return to Philip Darcy, who is now briskly cantering over the moor to pay her a visit, humming and singing as he goes, the same joyous-hearted creature as ever, full of bright hopes and happy thoughts, little anticipating the check that awaits him, ere he again re-enters the gates of the Priory.

"Everything seems going well with me just now," said he to himself, rejoicingly, "my election seems pretty sure, from what I heard last night; the purchase of this estate appears likely to turn out a far better affair than when I plunged head-first into buying it, merely to save old Sir Magnus from the consequences of his obstinacy, in exasperating his creditors in every way that a misapplied ingenuity could devise; besides which....." here he paused, for though his thoughts were busy with Florence, he hardly liked to breathe her name, even to himself, "and last, but not least, Pauline has taken to herself a new affection, which I sincerely hope has effectually effaced the memory of the first; so with a fair start in life, and the world before me, I think it will be my own fault if I do not enjoy myself in a very comfortable manner. But this, I presume, is the cottage at the bottom of that meadow, so if I take a short cut across the fields I can miss the entrance to the village."

So saying, he struck off the footpath, by the side of which he had hitherto been riding, and leaping a low fence, galloped towards the cottage, which he supposed from Leila's description to be the one he sought. As he approached, however, he fancied that he could see the form of a man lounging up and down the gravel walk before the house, with a huge China pipe in his mouth, and arrayed in a ridiculously gaudy dressing-

gown, a sufficiently improbable apparition in the garden of the widow lady, whose acquaintance he had come to seek. So he reined in his horse to take a better survey, before he ventured to intrude upon the premises of a perfect stranger.

As he thus remained stationary, and gazing with all his might at the garden before him, the little gate opened, and a young lady tripped swiftly forth, dressed as if about to take a long walk, and carrying a bag upon her arm filled with books and papers, which seemed to betoken that her calling was connected in some way or other with education. Darcy's heart beat quick, and his colour rapidly went and came, as he recognized the figure now hurriedly advancing towards him, then wheeling his horse, as if he were conscious of having mistaken his road and was desirous of altering his direction, he cantered down to the brook which ran at the bottom of the field, took it in a flying leap in a very artistic manner, and reappearing at the other side of the hedge, which now interposed between him and the cottage garden, he leisurely awaited the arrival of the lady, who was walking briskly towards the town along the very footpath, by the side of which he had lately ridden. He had nerved himself up for a little scene, since his anxiety to hear how his boyish lady-love had fared in her marriage (a subject upon which Leila had said nothing) was too great to admit of the slightest wish to avoid the meeting, but he was not at all prepared for the greeting which he received, which seemed to infer that his appearance was so very far from being wholly unexpected, that it was positively looked for, and mistaken for a ready obedience to a previous summons upon her part.

"You have indeed answered my letter without unnecessary delay, Philip Darcy," said the lady, in re-

markably good English, though with an unmistakeably foreign accent, "but I almost think you have not been quite as prudent as usual, in riding out so far to meet me. But that perhaps, under the circumstances, signifies little. Now! what is to be done, and what course do you intend to take? for I warn you, that it will be as well to be very prompt in your movements, unless you intend to take the consequences of what you have done, which would be the more honourable plan, but hardly the one that my experience of you entitles me to expect."

"I have received no letter from you, Pauline—Madame...I cannot give you your proper name, but pardon my mistake," said Darcy, in a hurried tone, and taking no notice of the insulting nature of her concluding sentence, "and so know nothing of the matter to which you allude; nor, to tell the honest truth, of any common interest which you and I can possibly have now, since you have taken to yourself a new partner of all your joys and sorrows, and withdrawn from me even the confidence of a friend, with which you were good enough to honour me for a little time after....." here he gave a great gulp as he came to the last word, "after we parted."

"Oh! Mr. Darcy! I cannot tell you the dreadful story which that letter contains, nor is it necessary that I should do so, since it will be in your hands by the afternoon, no doubt—at least I hope so, for I would not have it fall into wrong hands for the world. But of that I trust there is no fear; it must merely have arrived after you had left the Priory. But to come to the point, my husband has discovered the folly of which we were guilty three years ago in Scotland, and I am terribly afraid that it will prove a desperate business for both of us."

"What folly!" said Darcy, in amazement. "Upon

my word, I am not aware that we were any more absurd there, than during the whole of that year spent throughout in Fool's Paradise. Pray be more explicit in your statements, for I assure you that I have no idea what you mean."

"Do you not remember," replied Pauline, "our picnic in that beautiful glen by the lake, and our acting the part of host and hostess for a merry jest, and your introducing me to the company as your wife, and the mock ceremonial of the Forest bridals?"

"Some such wild frolic I do remember," said Darcy, turning pale, "but such trumpery nonsense could never be brought up again now, and after one of the parties is married, too! Pooh, Pauline! you are dreaming of some fancied danger which has no real existence."

"I tell you," repeated the lady, earnestly, and almost angrily, "it is no fancied danger, but a real and imminent one. My husband hates me with a hatred of which you cold English know nothing, and there are few things indeed which he would not willingly do to avenge himself upon us, in consequence of....." she burst into tears, and wrung her hands, instead of completing the sentence. "Heaven forgive him for his vile suspicions!" continued she, sobbing, "but there is no evil which he would scruple to work you, if he had the opportunity."

"I cannot imagine, Pauline, that he can do us any harm by a scheme which appears to me as foolish as it is wicked; and as to his injuring you, I meant what I said, when I told you years ago, that if ever I were called upon by you, for the sake of old times, to make any sacrifice, or undertake any task for your assistance, I would listen to the appeal, though it cost me life, or limb, or worldly wealth to redeem my promise. To *that* pledge I firmly adhere now, and if I can serve

you, let me but know what you require, and you shall not be disappointed."

"Believe me you are quite mistaken about the importance of this affair," reiterated Pauline. "He has taken excellent legal advice upon the subject, and the opinion is in favour of his position. Unless you can manage to compromise with him, and by some means or other prevent his pressing his case, he will inevitably rid himself of me by proving my previous marriage to you. But it is useless to talk over the business now, before you have read the letter which I sate up all last night, after my return from the Priory, to write for your warning. You can always find me, whenever you want to consult me, returning from the town at about four o'clock, and I shall expect to hear from you in a day or two. So farewell! and do not throw away the chances, faint as they are, which are now afforded you by being put on your guard a little time before the storm-cloud breaks," and she motioned to him to leave her, and turned aside out of the path, as an extra hint that she wished to break off the conference.

"Tell me, Pauline!" exclaimed Phil, as she moved away, "are you also in this vile plot? I cannot help suspecting that you are, and yet it seems as if it were not possible."

"I was not, Philip Darcy, but I am now! my heart recoiled from the very idea when Karl suggested, in cruel mockery, what he called an amicable arrangement upon mutual convenience, but I repeat that I am in the plot now; and if you wish to know when I changed my mind, and why, simply recall to memory your lover-like behaviour to Florence Montgomery, and forming your own opinion of the light in which I should regard that, arrive at the natural conclusion *that you have nothing to expect from me.*"

Darcy would have spoken again, and expostulated with her upon the monstrous injustice of avenging his inconstancy to a lady, who herself had married in the interim, with a malignity which nothing but a sense of intolerable wrongs could even palliate, and no injury could actually justify; but she waved him aside with an expression of such rage, that he deemed it more prudent to wait for a clearer knowledge of his position before he took any further steps, so raising his hat with scrupulous politeness, he bade her good-morning, and turning his horse's head, struck once more into the road which led to Mrs. Burton's cottage.

"Surely there can be no danger!" thought he; "and yet there certainly are some very strange cases in the papers every now and then, which seem to depend more upon which side can out-swear the other than on either justice or probability; at any rate I will put this affair into Owen's hands without delay, and see what he can make of it, before I distress myself unnecessarily about what may prove after all a false alarm," and he tried to hum and recover his cheerfulness all to no purpose.

For the first few minutes he almost regretted his chivalrously honourable treatment of the girl who had so often and so completely put herself in his power; for his knowledge of the world taught him, how far more easily she would have been managed now, had he played a baser and more treacherous part then, and he was sorely tempted for awhile to entertain very evil thoughts, but this soon passed away, and better feelings resumed their sway.

"If I can never win her," said he to himself, taking Florence's camellia from his breast, and kissing it most devoutly, "I will try to be worthy of her friendship. I will still make her my pole-star in all honour

and veneration, like the knights of old, to whom the lady of their love was far more, and far holier, than a mere object of passion. I will always be true to her in soul, and if I were to die, or any harm come to me, perhaps she would shed a tear for me after all." And the bright drops stood in poor Phil's eyes, as he looked forward to his dreary future.

But the brisk pace at which he rode soon brought him to the end of his journey, and putting on the air of merriment usual to him, he rang at the bell in the ivy-covered porch with his old bright smile upon his face, to all appearance as joyous a visitor as even Menie, who had never seen him grave, could possibly have anticipated.

"I am very glad that you have so soon found your way over to our little cottage, Mr. Darcy," said Mrs. Burton, rising to receive her guest, as he entered, "and think it very kind of you, to make time to call upon us, when you have so much to do, and so many other things to distract your attention. We have heard so much of you from Charlie, and indeed my little daughter has lately been so full of her new friend, that I almost feel as if I had known you for years. And now permit me to thank you as heartily to your face, as I have always done behind your back, for your extreme kindness and generosity to my son, whose desire for a scholastic life would have found no scope for its indulgence, had it not been for the sterling goodness of your heart, in sparing him a defeat, which it is abundantly evident that he must have suffered from you, had you so chosen. No words of mine are sufficient," continued the grateful mother, her eyes filling with tears, "to express to you the inestimable benefit which that service has been to us."

"My dear Mrs. Burton," replied Darcy, laugh-

ing, "you must not give me credit for more heroism than I deserve. In the first place, I had a malicious satisfaction in directing a few shafts of indirect satire at a man whose whole university life had been one consistent series of mean trucklings to the party in the state, who are the open and avowed enemies of the system to which he owed his station in society, nay, the bread itself which he was then eating; secondly, I did, and do now, think that it is an inconceivable folly to go on teaching history in our schools, and yet neglect all application of it to our own times, as every man must do, who combines erudition in the history and state of society in ancient Greece and Rome, with the democratic imbecility of so-called Liberal politics in the present day, seeing that the one unvarying testimony of those annals is to the effect that the people were always running their heads into every silly scrape they could find, and entangling themselves in every scheme of commingled knavery and folly that was laid before them, until some of the higher classes arose to rescue them out of their trouble, with the half contemptuous pity with which one picks a drunken man out of a gutter, to be murdered, banished, or overwhelmed with lying calumnies for their pains; and lastly, my dislike to taking any advantage of Charlie's nervousness, proceeded from a kind of school-boy love of fair play, and as this was the first cause of my taking an interest in him, there is nothing to admire in that. As for all the rest, it followed as a matter of course, with a fellow like me, who invariably carries out the prevailing fancy to the very utmost."

"It is a very good thing, then, Mr. Darcy," said Mrs. Burton, courteously, "that your prevailing fancies generally appear to take the turn of doing something *generous and kind-hearted*."

Darcy bowed in acknowledgment of the compliment, and anxious to change the subject, inquired of Menie whether she had finished the sketch upon which she was engaged when he had last seen her. She replied in the negative, but confessed that it was in a much more forward state than when he had seen it in Leila's scrap-book ; so being requested to let him criticise the progress she had made, she left the room to fetch it for inspection. During her absence, Darcy took the opportunity to narrate the mistake he had made, as to the cottage, in hopes of gaining a little more information about the denizens, but with very faint success. All that Mrs. Burton knew was, that they were Germans, that their name was Krummacher ; that the lady gave lessons in her native language and French, as also in singing, if her pupils at first applying to her were tolerably grounded already, if not, either from pride or want of patience, she declined to take them ; that her husband followed no occupation of which she had heard, excepting the composition of a work on foreign politics, of no interest to English readers, and, as she had been informed, of very revolutionary principles, and doubtful morality ; and that they lived on extremely bad terms, owing, as was generally reported, to the husband's suspicions that she had married him in pique at being forsaken by a former lover—here Phil's face lengthened marvellously—but the particulars of which no one knew. She was a very cheerful, good-natured little woman, and very much liked by her pupils ; but the man was very little better than an absolute savage. Furthermore she knew nothing, but as Leila Mainwaring was a great friend of the lady, it was likely that she could tell him more upon the subject.

The entrance of Menie with her drawing portfolio *here put an end to the conversation, in which, how-*

ever, Darcy had already heard enough to convince him that Mrs. Burton could contribute nothing to his previous knowledge of Pauline's condition. So he turned to the sketches with the air of a man having just concluded a little piece of trifling gossip, in which he feels no deeper interest than a passing curiosity, and delayed his inquiries till his return to the Priory.

"You see, Mr. Darcy," said the enthusiastic little artist, as she spread her portfolio on the table, "I have added another figure to the group since you last saw it, and I flatter myself that it is a great improvement. If you remember, Menteith was then huddled away in a corner, and you could not see his face; now you have him more in the foreground, and can catch the expression of his features. That is a good model-head, indeed, for a cowardly, mean-hearted villain, like the betrayer of poor Wallace, and it was quite a windfall to have got an excellent opportunity of copying him. It took me a very long, cold sitting, though, to get it. I was obliged to ensconce myself under a hedge, for nearly an hour, before I could catch him as I wanted; but I am quite repaid for my trouble, for he is a very good villain indeed! very good!"

"It is certainly, in all respects but one, an excellently appropriate face for the man it represents," said Darcy, carefully examining the drawing before him, which represented the betrayal of Sir William Wallace into the hands of the English, "but it has one great fault. It is, as you say, a very capital head indeed for a dastardly scoundrel, but hardly a Scotch one. It is the only fault, I readily allow, but I fear that I must say that it is an important one; the countenance is too foreign."

"What a shame to abuse my very best portrait!"

said Menie, covering over her sketch in affected anger, "and after all the pains I took to obtain it, too! As to its being foreign, of course it is, considering that the man who sat, or rather stood, for the likeness, was that outlandish German, who lives in the cottage between here and the Manor House—that is where Florence Montgomery lives, you know," she added, in a mischievous tone; "but if the face does not belong to our country, the rascality depicted in it is universal, and belongs to the wretches everywhere, and that, as I understand, is the proper head for a picture after all. At any rate, the artists who paint the virgin as a fair-haired, blue-eyed maiden, with a pink and white complexion, can hardly throw stones at me. So you see, Mr. Darcy, that I err in very respectable society."

"That I will readily allow, pretty Menie, though I cannot so readily concede that it is wise to follow the errors, as well as the excellencies, of great men. A modern play, with a tithe of the historical blunders committed by the immortal Shakespeare, would very justly be hissed off the stage, yet we can admire his beauties with an enthusiasm which denies the claims of any other dramatist to enter into any comparison with him, much less to be considered his equal."

"The errors of great artists are more brilliant than the mechanical proprieties of common ones," quoth the little enthusiast of art.

"Be it so, then, Menie," said Phil, merrily, "and it has been well said, that he who damps a noble enthusiasm in the young, quenches a fire from heaven, that experience with the world will never rekindle; so far be it from me to inveigh against a sentiment which may elevate the mind if it injure the mere pictorial skill of the artist. But to turn to another subject; is that the Mr. Krummacher upon whose

privacy I very nearly intruded this morning, mistaking his house for yours?"

Menie nodded, but was too busily engaged in descanting upon her drawings, or thinking about Phil's last remarks upon scenic proprieties, to notice the changing features of her companion, so that he had abundant time to recover his equanimity, before he was hurried away to look at the poultry, and to answer her thousand questions about Charlie.

"You see how thoroughly Menie has enslaved me," said he, laughingly, to her mother, as he followed her from the room; and banishing as much as possible his gloomy thoughts, gave himself up for the time to the droll eccentric conversation of his child-sweetheart.

"You see that great long-legged cock," said she, "that is about the same colour as a japanned candlestick, I always call him Johnnie now, after a picture in Punch, of 'The boy who chalked up No Popery, and then ran away,' and I will tell you the reason: He was strutting about the yard, last October, as proud as a peacock, and giving himself most ridiculous airs to his four wives, when a kite swept down, and made a pounce upon one of the hens. Johnnie ran for his life into the cinder-hole, screaming with terror all the way, and let this bantam, who is one of the old breed, fight for him, which he did like a perfect hero, until Betsy came up and put the marauder to the rout with a besom. No sooner was the enemy gone, than out came my friend Johnnie, as valiantly as could be, and gave a vigorous crow, as if challenging all the world to single combat, evidently imagining himself to be the finest and most courageous bird in the whole universe; but I very speedily convinced him of his mistake, for I took my garden scissors, and cut off the end of the tail he was so proud of, and tied a *yellow rag* round his neck, which he wore for a whole

month, and surnamed him Johnnie, by which opprobrious appellation he is known to this day."

"And what did you do to the brave bantam?" asked Phil.

"I hung a coin round his neck for a medal," answered Menie, gravely, "and he has his breakfast first in a saucer by himself, while Johnnie is imprisoned under a rubbish-basket. Here he is to show himself? Is he not a little beauty? they talk about modern improved breeds, but I like the good old sorts myself."

Darcy stooped, and took up the bird to examine the coin round its neck, which turned out to be a very battered old six-kreutzer piece, from one of the smaller German states, though carefully cleansed by the tidy Menie from the unutterable filth of its native condition.

"You have not chosen a very valuable medal for your hero," said he, with a forced smile, for it recalled to mind the very subject he most wished to banish from his memory, "it is the vilest imitation of good metal that human ingenuity ever devised. I will give you a much prettier one." And he untied the riband which attached the coin to the neck of the bird, and threw the order of merit, with an impatient jerk, over the wall, into the adjoining farmyard.

"I am almost sorry that you did that," said Menie, rather ruefully; "it was given me by a very kind lady, and although I know that it is not worth much, yet she meant to be very obliging, and it seems a poor return to make her. I think I should like to go and pick it up again. The bantam shall wear your medal with pleasure, but I do really think that I had better get back Mrs. Krummacher's coin."

"Do so then, by all means, Miss Burton!" returned Phil, in an evident fury, that sorely puzzled

Menie, "and if you do not throw it away again, before a month is out, with even more disgust than I did, you are no true sister of old Charlie, or your mother's daughter either." And his eyes, usually so merry and gentle, blazed with an anger fearful to behold.

Menie burst into tears. "I beg your pardon," said she, very meekly, "if I have offended you; but pray tell me how I have done so."

Phil shook his head. "I was wrong, Menie, and I beg your pardon instead, for behaving so ill; but you have called up some very bitter memories indeed, and I could not restrain myself. I fear that you will be only too well acquainted, before very long, with the cause of my outburst; if not, forget all about it, and as you wish to please me, do not tell any one what a fool I made of myself; and now let us go and pick up the medal."

"Oh, no, Mr. Darcy! if it was given to me by an enemy of yours, or if it give you any pain that I should keep it, it may lie there for ever, as far as I am concerned. You have a good right to expect some deference to your wishes from Charlie's sister; all your enemies are mine, and what you like I like. There! let us go into the garden, and talk about something else. I promise never to say a word to any one; so now we are good friends again, are we not?"

"Yes, dear Menie!" replied Phil, with a glance of brotherly affection at the engaging little creature, who had taken one of his hands in both of hers, and seemed pleading for forgiveness of her involuntary offence, instead of being angry, as she very justly might have been, at the strange and abrupt rudeness of her companion.

They walked about the garden for a considerable

time, chatting about pictures, and flowers, and Charlie's probable degree, and it was not till Phil remembered that he might perhaps be keeping the early dinner at the cottage waiting by his long stay, that he remounted his horse, and rode rapidly back to the Priory—and Pauline's fatal letter.



CHAPTER XIII.

DARCY RECEIVES THE AMBASSADORS OF A HOSTILE TRIBE.

UPON his arrival at the Priory, Darcy was received by Leila, who had apparently been watching for him from the garden; for no sooner had he opened the gate of the court-yard, than she came running down to meet him, breathless with haste, and in a most excited state; and seizing him by the arm, dragged him up the avenue away from the house, as if anxious to communicate something to him, before he entered, nor was the cause of her nervousness long a secret.

"There have been all sorts of queer people here all the morning," said she, "and I am afraid that they bode no good. That ruffian-like, grimy-faced German, Krummacher, has called no less than three times already, asking to speak to you, accompanied by a Mr. Whiting, a lawyer of the very worst possible character; and what I think looks worse still, there is a rumour all over the town, that you will not even stand your election, if a dissolution takes place immediately, but will vanish abruptly, like the wicked Baron in a play! What is it all about?"

"My dear little Lola, don't frighten yourself," replied Darcy, kindly, stroking down her raven locks with all the gentleness which a mind harassed and ill at ease naturally feels for those of whose affection and good will, through weal or woe, there is no shadow of doubt; "there is a tremendous breeze blowing up, I honestly believe, but, please Providence! we will *weather* it yet; and if not, I suppose that I can bear

as well as others the weight of unmerited misfortune. You asked me last night to tell you my secret, this evening you shall know it; and although I cannot imagine that you can assist me in any manner, as you then hinted, at least you will be sorry for me, and it will be some comfort to have your warm little heart to pity my ill-luck. After dinner we will stroll up and down here as we used to do at Monkworth, but instead of the fairy stories I told you then by the bright moonlight, it will now be a tale of the cold, villanous world in very sober earnest, of the earth earthly enough to satisfy even the least romantic devotee to mere facts."

"You are invited to dine at Mr. Montgomery's to-day," said Leila.

"Well, you go yourself, then, and make my excuses, Leila—I will write a note to Mr. Montgomery myself; but yet—I think....."

"That I might be able to say a word for you to Florence," added Leila, finishing the sentence which he vainly strove to conclude.

Phil nodded assent. "Take an occasion of saying that I am just now suddenly thrust into a peculiarly painful position, and that it is not unlikely that I may be fearfully maligned. But beg her, Leila, to reserve her judgment until all is cleared up: I could not bear her to despise me, or to think that I had been such a scoundrel as they will try to represent me. You are my little plenipotentiary," he continued with a faint smile, "so mind you do your duty faithfully, and support the interests of your employer with all your eloquence."

"Yes! I will indeed, dear Phil! I know how kind and generous you are, and would not believe evil of you, although an angel told it to me; and never fear that Florence will do so either—so cheer up! you will have plenty of friends to care for you; and the more

that others try to pull you down, the more firmly we will stand by you, and see you righted." And with a smile of encouragement upon her lips, but the tears streaming down her cheeks, the affectionate and true-hearted little maiden ran back into the house to dress for her embassy ; while Darcy took one more turn up the avenue, to prepare himself for the battle which he fully perceived was now beginning in good earnest.

When he entered the drawing-room, where he expected to find his letters, and amongst them the critical missive of Pauline, he was informed by a footman that Mr. Whiting, an attorney from an adjacent town, had called more than once, with a foreign gentleman whom he knew by sight, but whose name he could not remember at that moment, and had left word that they would return punctually at two o'clock. "It is past the hour already," the man added respectfully ; "shall I keep them waiting, sir, while you take your lunch, or tell them to call again?"

"Show them into the breakfast-room, Reynolds," replied Philip, "and lay luncheon for two, not three, mind ! and tell Hans to be in the way, if I ring for him. One ring will mean that I want you to answer the bell ; two, that Hans is to come. And be sure to be extremely civil to Mr. Whiting as you let him in, for I have a reason for keeping him in good humour."

While he was yet speaking, the house-bell rang forth a sonorous peal, as though pulled by an impetuous hand, and Reynolds, opening the door to admit the visitors, ushered in, with the impassive face of a well-trained domestic, the little wizened form of Mr. Whiting, accompanied by his worthy employer and ally, Herr Karl von Krummacher.

"Good morning, gentlemen," said Darcy, as he entered the room into which they had been shown in *accordance with his directions* ; "I believe that you

have had the trouble of calling upon me more than once to-day already. May I request the favour of being informed of the nature of the business upon which you have been so diligent in seeking me?"

The little lawyer was about to commence a formal opening of the business in hand, when the German burst in, with a vehemence of gesticulation, which upon a less serious occasion would have been ludicrous enough—

"I come a not-at-all-to-be-liked little present to you to bring," sputtered he, in a most comical jumble of the Queen's English; "I want to return you mine woman, who is not mine woman at all, but your's; and if I, a great fool, had this known, I should not her have married."

"Speak in your own tongue, fellow," replied Darcy in German, "I understand it perfectly well, though I heartily wish now that I had never heard it, or even seen a person who could speak it; upon what villainous errand have you come now?"

"I am not as bad as a man who marries a young girl of seventeen, and then basely deserts her," retorted Krummacher in his native tongue, "so you need not show any of your English arrogance to me. I have come to tell you to take back your wife, for she is none of mine, and if she is not out of my house by this day week I will turn her out of doors. And I have come also....." Here he was interrupted by Mr. Whiting, who reminded him that he had put himself into the hands of his legal adviser, and that he must not interfere with the proceedings of that august personage. "In fact," he concluded, "I think you had better retire, and leave us alone for a little time. I will come down to your house in an hour."

Krummacher hesitated, and seemed unwilling to obey; but at length rose slowly from his chair, as

though about to quit the room, when, suddenly seized with a paroxysm of rage, he flew at Darcy like a wild beast, and attempted to gripe him by the throat and strangle him.

The result of a struggle between a loose-limbed, lubberly German, and an active young Cantab, who possessed the extra advantage of having been trained at Eton, and was the best light weight oarsman of his university, was not long a matter of doubt; and in almost less time than it takes to describe it, the assailant was deposited on his back, with his head in the coal-scuttle, expecting some such *coup de grace* as a kick in the face at the very least, after the valiant custom of the Continent. But nothing could be more remote from Phil's ideas of warfare, than to strike a fallen foe, so turning to Mr. Whiting, he merely remarked, with a bland smile, "There will be another little job for you, I expect," and rang the bell twice, very softly, but with a distinct pause between the two pulls. Hans, a strapping Hanoverian, who had accompanied Phil in almost all his Continental ramblings, and was as affectionate and trusty a squire of the body as ever accompanied knight-errant in his adventures, immediately made his appearance, with a mischievous look that betrayed his expectation of something amusing.

"Bring me John Sobieski," said his master, "and set all the doors open into the garden." Hans grinned in a very truculent manner, and with a military salute quitted the room upon his errand. Now, the said John Sobieski was not a man, as might very reasonably have been expected, but an enormous whip, which Darcy had purchased at Hermannstadt, and was so surnamed as being "the scourge of the ungodly," an appellation which he had often heard applied to the great King of Poland, and which he had selected as *an appropriate title of honour for a weapon which had*

more than once done him good yeoman service in the forests of Transylvania.

Upon the reappearance of Hans with this delicate implement, the previously reclining figure, which seemed to be enacting a study for a fountain, representing a water-god reposing upon his urn, for which the coal-scuttle formed no unapt substitute, reared itself up on end, and finding flight impracticable had recourse to a magniloquent speech instead.

"You never can intend to strike a nobleman and a member of a most distinguished family with a whip like a dog, or a pig," said he, in his native language. "I would have you to understand that I belong to one of the very best families in my native land, and have a 'von' before my name in token of my good blood. You must not take me for an obscure person, I assure you." And he extended a very odorous card to Darcy, whose detestation of stale tobacco smoke was one of his prevailing weaknesses.

"Certainly, Herr von Krummacher, replied Phil, with a low bow of mock respect, "I could not think of taking such an unwarrantable liberty with your exalted person as to mar your celestial skin with the marks of a horse-whip, at least with my own hands. But as my groom happens to be noble too, I shall leave you two illustrious strangers to settle your little differences between yourselves, simply deputing him to act as my substitute. Hans," continued he, "are not you of noble blood?"

"Certainly I am," replied that personage, his face lighting up with mischievous amusement, as he began to foresee his own share in the matter; "but I found it rather inconvenient eating nothing, even out of a crested spoon, so I dropped my title, and entered your service."

"Then," said Phil, tossing him the whip, "as I am

not worthy the honour of dealing with this august nobleman in person, do you take my place, and have a little rational conversation with him in the garden."

Krummacher made one violent bolt to effect his escape, and mistaking the back of the house for the front, or perhaps seeking, in a blind thirst for flight, the first open door he could find, rushed up the garden, into which he was followed by Hans, and with John Sobieski thundering in the rear, as noisily, and almost as fiercely, as in the rout beneath the walls of Vienna, flew along the avenue, and right through the hedge at the top, the gate being unfortunately locked, and thence floundered into the moat, where Hans continued flicking at him with the utmost zeal, until his victorious arm wearied with slaughter began to fail him; upon which he returned in triumph to the house, and left his victim to scramble out as best he might, and take his way home in a pitiful plight, considering the valiant mood in which he had left it.

Meanwhile, the conversation between Darcy and the little lawyer was flowing on in a manner rather more amicable than the unlucky German at all imagined, and while he was consoling himself for his flagellation, to say nothing of his ducking in the moat, by the reflection of how handsomely he was being avenged by his legal ally, that worthy gentleman was discussing a Perigord pie, washed down by excellent Madeira, in very suspicious friendship with the very man whom he had come to exterminate. His first impression had been that there would be a violent scene between Darcy and himself, and his mind vacillated between joy at the prospect of heavy damages to be recovered from him in case of an assault, besides a goodly bill of costs as his own attorney, and some little fear of the disagreeably thorny road to obtaining *them*, which he dismally suspected would more re-

semble the way to heaven promised by Bishop Juxon to King Charles the Martyr, in being painful, than in point of brevity. He was considerably relieved, therefore, to find from the commencement of Darcy's conversation, that he was likely to be permitted to make an excellent job of the business entrusted to him without any disagreeable consequences to himself, and the negotiations opened under most auspicious circumstances, so far as the friendly demeanour of the plenipotentiaries towards each other might be considered to portend.

"I had only just come in from making a call, Mr. Whiting," said Phil, drawing a chair to the table, as the door closed upon Hans and his victim, and motioning to his companion to do the same; "I am rather sharp-set, for your moorland air is a marvellous whetter of the appetite, at least I find it so, and with your permission will begin my luncheon, in which I hope you will do me the pleasure of joining me."

So saying, he plunged forthwith into the Perigord pie before him, helped his little friend, who was gurgling forth some indistinct sounds of refusal, filled both their glasses with wine, took a little sip of his own, and then with an Arcadian simplicity, which completely baffled even the penetration of the astute lawyer, proposed, whilst transferring another portion of the pie to his own plate, to enter into the little piece of business before them, in a pleasant, friendly manner, as two gentlemen should.

Whiting was tremendously puzzled, despite of all his experience in men; it was clear enough, to be sure, that this young fellow was not altogether as simple as he might reasonably have been expected to prove, and as a matter of course, a shrewd man of the world, like the attorney, was not for one instant deceived by this *extreme affectation* of good-will; but then remained

the doubt, whether he was half cunning and half shallow, no uncommon conjunction in men of his age and standing, in which case he was even more easily to be over-reached, than if, with manly and frank-hearted confidence in his innocence, he had thrown himself upon the justice of his cause; or whether he was really a very crafty youth indeed, and a proper person to treat with upon equal terms of reciprocity, and to whom eventually to transfer the blessing of his professional services.

And this was such a business to transact in a friendly way. If it had been a writ, it would not have mattered half as much; there are abundance of lies to be told in defence of that operation; the serving it in person to save unnecessary publicity; a desire to suggest means of arrangement, &c., &c.; but to come to a man to tell him that you have undertaken the office of foisting upon him a wife, by a most outrageous misinterpretation of a most preposterous law, and of forcing him to confirm in earnest what was notoriously only meant for an idle jest, was rather more than even the practised impudence of the red-haired spinner of legal webs could pretend to reconcile with friendly feelings, and he felt most acutely all the inconvenience of making the first move.

"I am afraid, Mr. Darcy," he said at last, screwing up his courage to urge his host to begin the subject which it so puzzled him to open to his satisfaction, "that my business is not one that admits of being handled in what may appear to you a friendly manner; not that I wish, I am sure, to be hard upon you, but duty is duty, and when I have a matter put into my hands it becomes my own, and I take exactly the same interest in it as if I were the person concerned."

"Bravo!" replied Darcy, "that is the proper way *to treat it*; and so I suppose that you mean to say

that as every man has a right to do as he likes with his own, you also intend to make the best job of it that you can, and to get as much out of it as possible."

The little man grinned a kind of furtive smile, as he fancied that he began to see his way rather more clearly. "No, Mr. Darcy, no!" he cried, in a virtuous tone, "that is not my way of doing business. I mean that I am as anxious for my client as for myself, and what he entrusts to me I am determined to carry out unflinchingly. The days of corrupt judges are gone by, my dear sir, and with them has also perished any hope of influencing the members of my profession with any promises of illicit gain. Oh, dear me! I never should have dreamt of such a shameful thing."

"Dreamt of what?" asked Phil, demurely. "Surely, you cannot suspect me of attributing mercenary motives to you, or of attempting to bribe you to desert your trust? I merely meant, that your client can have no object in what he is now doing, except simply to extort money, and therefore that I should like to deal with you, in whose hands the negotiation is placed, in as friendly a manner as possible, upon a subject, where, I am sure, it is not your wish to treat me with unnecessary rudeness, and it is my anxiety, of course, to do all that lies in my power to secure myself from all danger of further annoyance. Now, will you have the goodness to tell me how matters stand, that I may know what is required of me, and I dare say we shall contrive somehow to come to an amicable agreement. Let me give you another glass of Madeira."

"I am sure, my dear sir," replied the other plenipotentiary, pushing over his glass to accept the invitation contained in the last words of his antagonist, "I should be exceedingly sorry to put matters upon a

more disagreeable footing than is absolutely inseparable from the painful nature of the case, but I grieve to say that my instructions from Mr. Krummacher are so explicit, that I fear that it is impossible to avoid our appearing for awhile in a rather hostile position towards each other. I am very sorry indeed, but there is no help for it."

"Well, Mr. Whiting, if it be so, I must not blame you for discharging your duty to your client," said Darcy, calmly, "but I am still at a loss to discover why all this cannot be quietly and decently done."

"Why, you see," resumed Whiting, "that Mr. Krummacher most distinctly affirms, that the lady who now passes for his wife was married to you in Scotland nearly three years ago, and that he is prepared to prove it. He has put his case into my hands, and has entrusted the papers necessary for the support of his assertion to my care, and I have no alternative but to press the suit against you to the best of my ability, and that, it is to be feared, cannot be effectually done without adopting a course which would be very unpalatable to you. For this, you must know, is a case in which it is imperatively necessary to have the minds of the public imbued with the greatest possible pity and sympathy for the wrongs of Mrs. Krummacher; and to represent her as a deeply injured woman, involves accusing you of injuring her, consequently....." an ominous silence, and most eloquent shake of the head supplied the place of a more regular end to his sentence.

"Well, Mr. Whiting," said Darcy, investigating the colour and brightness of his wine against the light, with as critical an air as though the condition of the Madeira were the only question that really interested him, however politely he might be listening to the *concerns of his companion*, "I think that you have

been either a very unlucky, or a very foolish man. That it is desirable to be employed in a pretty little affair like this, I can easily imagine, as also that having undertaken the case you do not intend to stick at trifles in conducting it to a prosperous issue ; but what I do not quite so clearly comprehend, is, why you have chosen to be the legal adviser of the plaintiff, if I may use that word to convey my meaning, instead of the defendant. I think that, under similar circumstances, I should infinitely have preferred defending a gentleman and a person of some standing against a fellow like Krummacher, to supporting his very rascally attack upon his wealthier neighbour. To have established some claim upon the good-will of a large landowner in your neighbourhood would have been something, besides the certainty of having your expenses paid ; whereas you will inevitably be a loser rather than a gainer, by the course you are now taking, in every respect, excepting the one single particular of your bill of costs, about the security of which you know best."

The lawyer's lanthorn-jaws fell perceptibly. He had never given a thought to this view of affairs, and he only half believed even now, that he could have had the management of the defence had he played his cards better. Yet Darcy's words were so far from being without some effect upon him, as to point out a possible loss which he might have sustained, while they held out a distant prospect of contriving after all to achieve that delicate piece of sporting good management, "the running with the hare, and hunting with the hounds."

Phil saw his advantage, and having a great object to serve just at present by conciliating the little man before him, he followed it up by another stroke, which *more than ever* defied the experience of Whiting, to

discover whether he were as soft as a lump of dough, or a very awkward customer for even so shrewd an intellect as his own to deal with.

"That blackguard of a German," said he, "will bring an action against me for assaulting him, I can have no doubt—in fact, as a mere matter of business you will recommend him to do so; moreover, I shall have to compromise the matter, and the only question will be about the amount of compensation, which you and I can do very nicely by ourselves, you know, so upon my life I shall have been a little gold mine to you; but as to managing the other affair in a friendly way, all I meant was simply this: don't allow any more fuss to be made about it out of doors than is unavoidable; keep it as snug as you can, and let my attorney have fair notice of all the different steps that are being taken; and in that case, I am quite willing to speak very civilly of your behaviour to me, however dead you go against me in court. I think that is taking as friendly a view of the matter as can be expected."

"I am really very sorry, Mr. Darcy," replied Whiting, with a tremendous emphasis upon the superlative, "indeed I may say unfeignedly sorry, that I have not the honour of being employed by you, instead of being compelled to undertake the case against you. But that cannot very well be helped now; however, believe me that I will spare no trouble to conduct the affair in the most considerate and honourable manner, and that I shall be most happy to show you every courtesy consistent with my duty to my client; so I think I can promise you thus much, that there shall be plenty of time given you to see what can be done, and that if I can persuade my client to enter into any compromise, I will certainly do so. You may safely rely upon me."

"*As to compromise,*" said Darcy, mournfully, and

with all his affected gaiety and forced indifference entirely swept away, "there will be no wish upon my part to avoid a searching investigation into the rights of the case. If the marriage be legal, despite of the absurd nature of the whole transaction, which speaks for itself in common sense, if not in law, I should wish to know the fact past all doubt, and not go stumbling on in the dark; if it be illegal, I should wish to pronounce its nullity openly, and in the face of day, in order to leave my movements unshackled for the future. I am quite ready to meet Mr. Krummacher's assertions in due time; at present, I am very much taken up by other affairs, and am not inclined to burthen myself with this new source of annoyance; so my first request to you must be for a little time to give proper attention to a matter which has fallen upon me too unexpectedly to find me prepared to enter into it, and also for such freedom from a painful publicity as your good offices can obtain for me."

"All this shall be scrupulously attended to," said the lawyer, bowing in a most gracious manner, "and you shall have no cause to complain of my incivility. But there is one thing more which I think I had better mention. My client threatens to turn his wife out of doors in less than a week, which of course would create a great deal of gossip of the very nature which you wish to avoid. Had I not better offer her the shelter of my humble roof?"

Darcy hesitated for a few moments. "That might perhaps be construed into a kind of acknowledgment of her claims upon me," said he.

"Good!" quoth the little attorney, "very good. You are quite a thoughtful young man, I see; so I think I must take her upon my own responsibility, and perhaps some day or other we may talk this *matter over* also in an amicable manner. By the by,

you must give me the address of your attorney in London, that I may communicate with him, for I see that you do not wish to be disturbed yourself."

"Mr. Owen, of —, Lincoln's Inn Fields," answered Darcy, writing the name on the back of a card to avoid mistakes. "He will do all that is necessary for me without my interfering at all at present."

"Excepting in the little amicable conversations, Mr. Darcy," returned the lawyer with a grin, "and those we had better have to ourselves. Very good indeed!" Having thus brought his business to an end, and victualled himself for a month's siege, he took up his hat, bade Darcy adieu with a thousand expressions of the deepest respect, and left the house, taking the direction of his client's cottage at a slow pace, and with a rather undecided manner.

"Time is something, especially if an election should be as near as they seem to suppose," thought Phil; "besides which, the more opportunity I have of circulating my story among my friends before the other gets abroad, the better for me. But if this fool's play should turn out a sad reality, and if this ridiculous farce should constitute a legal marriage....." Here his musings fixed themselves upon the terrible gulf that would then be interposed between him and Florence; and the heart of the poor boy was desolate enough, as he wended his way up-stairs into his dressing-room, with a listless, heavy step, strongly contrasting with the rapid bound with which he had descended there only a few hours ago, so full of hope and buoyant spirits.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE MOTH STILL FLUTTERS ROUND THE CANDLE.

“THIS then is the letter which cost Pauline such a long time to write, and me no little time to decipher,” soliloquised Phil, as he threw the said missive on the table, and sank back in his chair to think it over. “Really, I think that she might almost as well have saved herself the exertion, and confined her remarks to the simple declaration of ‘war to the knife’ which it contains. There is little enough of either justice or mercy to be expected from her, that is very plain, and with the hard swearing which it is most shamefully confessed is to be employed against me, I stand, I am afraid, but a very indifferent chance of escape. As to compromising, I dare say I could manage that, but now that the story has once got abroad it would not answer my purpose, for I could not marry with such a thing hanging over my wife’s head. I see nothing to be done, but merely to take my chance of the proverbial falling out of rogues, and to trust to fortune to extricate me from a dilemma where I honestly believe that all the wisdom of Ulysses would prove at fault. I wish now that I had not refused Mr. Montgomery’s invitation ! what was the use of doing so ? for I cannot lock myself in inaction for all the weary months that will in all probability elapse before my fate is decided. I have a great mind to go after all ! there is plenty of time yet, for Leila can hardly have reached the Manor House by this time, for she must ride round by the road, and at a tolerably sober pace, because of having the groom behind her, whereas Oberon will carry me across

country in half the time. Upon my word I will!" and ringing the bell to order his horse, he proceeded to change his dress with a celerity more like his former self than his late despondency at all promised.

There is something in the very fact of being actively and busily employed, even if it be in so trivial a matter as dressing in haste to put in execution a newly conceived plan which is a marvellous antidote to despair, when acting upon the elastic spirits of youth, and which of itself tends to raise the courage, and suggest brighter hopes; at least so it was with Philip Darcy, for although no one prospect of better fortunes had presented itself to his mind during the last few minutes, founded upon any reasonable grounds for encouragement, sure it is that he mounted his horse in an infinitely happier frame of mind than that in which he had been reviewing his position, under the dispiriting influence of a cheerless inaction.

He felt as if there was something to do, and something definite to struggle against, and his proud heart rose to the occasion; the whole affair seemed now to assume the aspect of a foul charge made against his character before Florence, and before her alone, and he burnt to clear himself at that tribunal with an anxiety that threw into perfect shade all the consequences to himself in other respects; in fact, in his overwhelming desire to remove all obstacles to the esteem and good opinion of his lady-love he almost forgot the barriers which still interposed between him and the love he sought, and his whole heart seemed one parching thirst for justice as to his supposed treachery and infidelity; and that he should so clear himself he felt little doubt, so that while his present excitement continued he was almost happy.

He arrived at the Manor House just as Leila had *completed her mission*, and warned to take leave by *sun.* which at that time of year permitted

but little time for ladies to ride in the afternoon, was already about to return, when the unexpected appearance of Darcy himself completely changed the whole aspect of affairs. The groom was sent back with a note to the Colonel from his dutiful daughter, to inform him that Darcy had altered his mind for the second time that day, and that after refusing Mr. Montgomery's invitation to dinner he had now accepted it, and was going to stay. And, moreover, that she, the said Leila, was purposed to do the same, wherefore, if her papa would join them she should return with him at night; if not, he was hereby requested to forward certain matters specified in the enclosed orders to her maid, as she should in that case sleep at her present quarters, and return in the morning. Florence, she added, desired her to say that she should be very glad to see Miss O'Flaherty, but as she was not fond of telling stories, even as the deputy of another person, she begged leave to exchange that mendacious expression for a simple message, that she might come if she chose. Having thus relieved her mind of what she considered the responsibility of putting everything in proper order, she found time to express her wonder at Phil's appearance, and to hazard a shrewd guess at its reason, viz., an inclination to tell his own story to Florence, before she heard it from any other and hostile quarter.

To this Darcy made answer by a nervous confession that she was partially right, inasmuch as Mr. Montgomery had been so friendly to him on his first appearance, that he felt as if he owed him an explanation of any circumstances which might seem injurious to his character. Leila laughed outright, as well she might, at this somewhat transparent veil of his real intention, and even Florence, though less disposed to mirth, *could scarcely suppress a smile of more meaning than*

she was willing to evince ; but his explanation had the merit at any rate of putting the matter on a footing credible enough to be accepted by those who wished to believe it, and so far had the intended effect.

Mr. Montgomery had been out all day upon business, and was unaware of Darcy's first refusal of his invitation, and so required no enlightenment as to his change of purpose, and Menie, who had been put off to another day, in consequence of the party from the Priory having sent an excuse, could easily be summoned at any time. So nothing remained, in Leila's opinion, since all had been arranged in so satisfactory a manner, but for Phil to commence his tale of sorrows forthwith, like another Æneas at the court of Dido. This, however, he declined doing for the present, but promised to keep his word that very evening, while the other gentlemen were over their wine, as he could easily slip out and join his young confidante in the conservatory, when she should certainly hear the whole story from beginning to end, upon which she appeared to lavish so much curiosity.

" May I bring Florence with me ?" asked Leila.

" Certainly," answered Phil, " if Miss Montgomery will take the trouble of listening to the true version of a tale, which through a very garbled and unfair representation of it she is sure to hear before long from abundance of mouths. I should be delighted to be honoured with her opinion, for, to tell you the truth, it is an affair where I am peculiarly anxious to know in what way ladies will be affected by the calumnies which are now being spread."

" I shall be very happy to assist you with my opinion, if that be of any use to you, Mr. Darcy," said Florence, kindly, " and as I should fear from Leila's account to-day, that you are likely to be very *seriously* annoyed by certain persons who have a hold

over you, owing to some boyish indiscretion which they intend to make use of as a mode of extortion, I think it possible that I may be some little guide to you in deciding what amount of risk you run of the tale receiving credit, and to what extent you may safely leave to the discretion of those that hear it the self-apparent improbability of the whole affair. So I will join Leila in the conservatory with much pleasure, and will promise to give you my sincere opinion very candidly and honestly."

The return of Mr. Montgomery here put an end to the conversation, and the two ladies withdrew to the duties of the toilette.

Darcy then learnt that his host had been perfectly correct in his suspicions of the previous evening, and that although the telegraphic despatch received by Colonel Mainwaring had given a true report concerning the resignation of the ministers, and the visit of Lord Knowsley to Her Majesty, yet there was no expectation whatever of that nobleman undertaking the duty of forming an administration at present: indeed it was an understood thing that there would be only a few changes in the cabinet, and that in all essential respects the ministry would continue the same.

"However," continued Mr. Montgomery, with a smile, "if report speaks truly, we electors of Midhampton shall not be deprived of the pleasure of supporting you in your election, for it is currently believed that amongst the new appointments will be found that of the Honourable Augustus Tomnoddy, who at present represents our borough; and in that case there will be a vacancy, which it must be our duty to take care is not filled up by the retiring member. By the by, I have heard some strange rumours to-day about an early indiscretion of yours, which, I trust, are not founded upon any truth whatsoever:

for however innocent of any evil intention you may have been, I fear that it will turn out greatly to your disadvantage, under the present circumstances, unless it be thoroughly disproved."

"My dear sir," answered poor Phil, with a heightened colour and excited manner, which sufficiently proved that there was more foundation for the report than was at all advisable for his freedom from all annoyance, "I wished to speak to you on this very subject, had I found you at home when I first called, and should be extremely obliged by your allowing me an hour's conversation to-morrow; but as it is now getting late, I will not trespass upon your time, but defer my communications to another day. But as to your political news, I presume that if the case be as you suppose, the election will come upon us even more speedily than we anticipated, and that we shall have to make a fight for it next week, or at the very latest the week after. For I take for granted that the new minister will be anxious to take his seat in the house without delay, as I believe he belongs to the oratorical department of the government, and considers it his proudest boast, that it makes no earthly difference to him what side of a question he is called upon to take, and what he has to attack or defend."

"They will certainly press on his re-election without delay," said Mr. Montgomery, "both for the reasons you assign, and also from the fear of our gaining strength by having time to organize our opposition; so in all probability before the next week be past we shall have it all over either one way or the other; therefore as there is very little time to be lost, I have invited several of the leading men of our party to meet you here to-night, and I hope that we shall be able to arrange our plan of action without further delay."

Phil thought of his promised explanation in the

conservatory, and was by no means pleased at the prospect of having to exchange his conversation with Florence, for a long, dry, political discussion with his supporters ; but his good genius at length suggested to him a mode of reconciling his duty and inclination, which met with the success its ingenuity deserved, and left him at liberty to keep his engagement, without giving any offence to his committee, by absenting himself from their consultations.

“I shall be most happy to meet the gentlemen of whom you speak,” said he, “but as to discussing such important matters over your hospitable board, with the accessories of claret and Burgundy, that is a different affair. I almost suspect, from what I saw at the good Colonel’s, that two or three of your intended guests are rather more of the old school, regarding the iniquity of stopping the bottle, or flinching from your turn, than would precisely suit me, whose strength is not exactly of that kind which is tested by the amount of wine which I consume after dinner ; so, with your permission, I shall slip away, and air my wits a little before the business of the evening commences, and then, after coffee, and a song or two from the ladies, I am very much at your service. And now, pray do not let me keep you any longer from dressing, for your philippic against unpunctuality is too deeply impressed on my mind to permit me to run any risk of causing you, through politeness to me, to outrage your own principles. I can amuse myself with a book, till you come back, in a very pleasant manner.”

And he fairly performed, without the least impertinence, the delicate evolution of bowing the old gentleman out of his own drawing-room, in the hope of getting a few minutes with his daughter, should that lady chance, by any good luck, to come down-stairs

before the guests arrived. No such windfall, however, awaited him, for in a very few minutes after he had seated himself to the contemplation of a collection of most hideous portraits, entitled a "Book of Beauty," he was joined by Colonel Mainwaring and Miss O'Flaherty, the latter of whom instantly pounced upon him, to discharge upon his devoted head the vials of her virtuous indignation at his heretical villainy in having corrupted the mind of her niece Leila, with a choice assortment of most disrespectful stories about her beloved priests, which had by no means lost in the telling by being entrusted to the narrative powers of that facetious and imaginative little maiden.

Phil bore the brunt of her wrath with the most exemplary patience, and attempted to conciliate her for the time, by every means in his power, not so much from any disinclination to join issue upon the merits of the case, as from a wish to save her up for a grand demonstration before Mr. Dwight, upon whose arrival he purposed to open upon her the full fire of all his artillery of argument and raillery, if she would but give him a fair chance of thus evincing his anti-Romish zeal.

"I see that you have not a word to say for yourself, young man!" said Miss Dosy, triumphantly, "and it shows your sense not to attempt to defend your rubbishing Church, that is about as much like a real church as a lame jackdaw is like a soaring eagle; but I am not going to let you off so easily as you may think, for all that! I'll expose all your nonsense before the company, that I will, and you'll soon see who has the best of it. Telling my little fool of a niece all those great lies about holy Father Terence! I wonder that you are not ashamed of yourself; though it's little shame enough that's in you!"

"I really think, Miss O'Flaherty," returned Phil, with hypocritical humility, "that the fairest thing I could do, would be to apologise after dinner, and own how badly I behaved. I can hardly wonder that you are so angry with me, for it was very wrong indeed of me, though Leila ought not to have told."

"What ought not Leila to have told?" asked the voice of that lady herself, as she entered the room with Florence without being perceived by the belligerents; "that aunt had discarded her Bird of Paradise, because Philip did not admire it, and she says that gentlemen have a right to expect unmarried young ladies to consult their opinion, wherefore she has humbly bowed her own taste to his better judgment; or is it that aunty told me in strict confidence this morning, that if Phil stood for her county, she'd back him through fire and water, though he were the ghost of Martin Luther himself, for that he is the very moral of Tim Delaney of the Rangers, whom she flirted with in the days of Malachi with the golden collar, and has more mischief in him than the..... author of all wickedness."

"Leila!" interrupted the Colonel, "your tongue really promises well to satisfy all the requisitions of the discovery of perpetual motion; do leave off plaguing your aunt, who is a great deal too kind to you, and quite spoils you, by never scolding you as you deserve when you are impertinent; but you really are getting too bad for anything now."

"Well, then, aunty, box my ears well, and have done with it!" said Leila, inclining her glossy head to Miss Dosy, as if to receive her punishment in a submissive manner, which demonstration of humility was received with a loving hug, and a declaration that she was the most darling monkey in the whole world.

But the libellous insinuation that she had been

making some very laudatory comments upon Phil, appeared to disgust Miss Dosy's maiden heart beyond all measure, probably because the charge was not without considerable foundation ; and had it not been for the arrival of the other guests, she would have enlarged for an hour upon her disapprobation of that heretical youth, whom she once more vowed to expose after dinner, to teach him to speak more respectfully of his betters for the rest of his natural life. Nor did she neglect to keep her word ; for hardly were the party settled at table, than she attacked him with the utmost alacrity, on the subject of his manifold misrepresentations of the learning and piety of the Irish priesthood, a challenge which was now gladly taken up by Phil, who was perfectly willing to do battle before the approving eyes of Mr. Dwight. There is no necessity to recapitulate a hundredth part of the arguments used pro and con., by the disputants upon this knotty question, but there was one master-piece of polemical strategy displayed by Miss Dosy, which deserves to be recorded to her never-failing honour, as evincing an ingenuity and fertility of resource beyond all praise. Having led the conversation to the infallibility of the Church, and the irresponsible power over it confided to Peter and his successors from the very beginning, she was encountered by the very common-place objection, that it was evident that St. Paul did not acknowledge this supremacy, inasmuch as he withstood Peter to his face, and even upbraided him with his inconsistencies with regard to the obligations of the disciples to observe the Mosaic law, when he met him at Antioch ; but such a paltry argument could no more withstand the rushing stream of Miss Dosy's eloquence, than a bulrush could impede a mountain torrent, when swollen by the melting *snows of spring*. With an indignant sniff of scorn,

she turned to her puny antagonist, and by this unanswerable appeal, silenced for ever such idle opposition.

“And what if he did, I pray? did you ever hear or read of Paul being admitted to the company of the real apostles afterwards? No, indeed! he knew his place better than that, and ever afterwards busied himself in foreign parts, preaching the Gospel to the heathens, like those good men who are eaten in China with worm-sauce, at the Feast of Lanthorns.”

The allied forces of Messrs. Darcy and Dwight were brought to a sudden check, Phil being silenced by a fear of laughing, and the latter gentleman staring at his fair foe with open mouth, and a piece of pineapple balanced half way between his plate and lips, in expectation of seeing Miss Dosy disappear bodily through the floor, “with a melodious twang, and a slight smell of sulphur.” The lady pushed on to complete the rout, but, like many other valiant but indiscreet generals, lost much of her advantage by so doing, as she thereby laid herself open to the raillery which Darcy had been prevented from using on the previous occasion, by a sense of the impropriety of carrying a joke upon so serious a subject to too great lengths.

“You Protestants are uncommonly ignorant people,” said she, contemptuously, “after all the fuss you make about reading the Scriptures; to hear you talk, one would think that all the apostles had been heretics like yourselves, and that all their writings were on your side, whereas everybody knows it is just the contrary, for though St. Paul wrote an epistle to the Romans, which you own yourselves, I should like to know when he ever wrote one to the Protestants! But it’s all of a piece with the rest of your nonsense; you read everything out of a stupid English

version of a worthless modern Greek translation, made from the original Latin by some schoolmaster who whipt little boys into Homer, and a fellow they call Pindar, who is a sort of teetotaller—a precious nice lot of them altogether, upon my word !”

“ Pindar a teetotaller !” quoth Phil, with a shout of laughter. “ The Greek Testament a modern translation from the original Latin !” groaned Mr. Dwight, both at once ; but Miss Dosy was quite ready for not only two, but a thousand of such contemptible opponents, and into her onslaught she plunged once more, duly cheered on to action by Leila, who, being seated next to her by her own express desire, was most fervent in her admiration of her aunt’s eloquence, and with sparkling eyes was watching, with great satisfaction, the progress of the strife between the champions of the rival creeds.

“ A teetotaller ?” resumed Miss Dosy, “ of course he was ! have you been to school and don’t know that ? Didn’t I read something he wrote in what my nephew, Maurice Donovan, calls a crib, which means a translation which the boys have to buy with their own money, and mighty dear they are by the same token ! I gave Maurice thirteen and fourpence to get his, for he told me that the old doctor would cut a bit of skin out of him, to bind round the cane, to prevent its splitting when he beat the dunces, unless he had paid up by Saturday ; but I thought it a deal of money for it nevertheless. Well, as I was saying, I read a page or two myself, and there was one song that went capitally to the tune of ‘ The night before Larry was stretched,’ which began by saying that water was the best of all things ! Think of that, now ! recommending Christians to drink like the dumb creatures. It puts me in mind of what Dr. Quill said to my uncle when he had a fit of the gout :

“ ‘Squire,’ said he, ‘as you have begun so you may end, and as you have given yourself this attack by eating like a beast, bad luck to me if I don’t make you cure yourself by drinking like one, too!’

“ ‘What, doctor?’ says my uncle, all of a goggle, ‘I never heard tell, in all my life, of hard drinking curing the gout.’

“ ‘Nor I either,’ said Quill, taking a pinch of snuff.

“ ‘My soul!’ says my uncle, ‘you’re quite a conundrum to-day, Doctor.’

“ ‘Why, you great fool!’ says Quill, for he was a very free-spoken little man, ‘what do the beasts drink? water to be sure! and the sorrow a drop stronger than aqua pompaginis do you taste for a month, I promise.’

“ So the poor old Squire was put on the same allowance as the other pigs and beasts, and it was the death of him at last. For he said to me upon his death-bed: ‘Dossy, my dear!’ said he, ‘if it hadn’t been for that villain Quill, it’s a hearty man I’d have been this day; for he has the impudence to own to my face that I have water on my chest, and I appeal to you, how the blazes could it have got there, if it hadn’t been for him, and his nasty receipt for the gout, for I’ll kiss the vestments upon it, that I hadn’t drunk a drop of that stuff for fifty years, before I was fool enough to call him in. It’s a murdered man I am.’ And it’s not surprised that I’d be, if old Pindar, the teetotaller, wrote that book, which you pretend is a translation from the fine original Latin of the blessed saints.”

This whimsical idea gave free scope for Darcy’s merry rejoinders, and being now unfettered by any fear of getting upon too serious grounds, he continued to *tease the poor old maid*, to the delectation of Lella,

and the confirmation of all Mr. Dwight's hopeful anticipations of him, until the ladies withdrew, and the gentlemen were left to their political discussion of the existing state of affairs; the appointment of Mr. Tomnoddy to an office which would necessitate the resignation of his seat, being now announced as a fact beyond doubt, though as yet ungazetted in an official manner.

Darcy, however, remained no longer than was absolutely necessary to avoid an appearance of rudeness or neglect, and then urging some trivial excuse to his host for quitting the room, made his escape into the garden, and thence by a side door, which had been pointed out to him by Leila, to the conservatory, which, as the reader will remember, had been selected as the scene for the narration of his story.

CHAPTER XV.

HE WHO CHERISHES A VIPER, MUST BEWARE OF ITS FANGS.

IT is to be imagined, from the glowing description of Dido's Court given to us by the bard of Mantua, that the pious Æneas was called upon to narrate his woes in a very handsome hall, and under very comfortable circumstances; but really if I had the choice given me, I would far rather have selected for my dwelling-place during my recital, that lovely conservatory, enhanced, moreover, in its attractions, by such excellent company as that which now greeted Philip Darcy on his appearance from the councils of the Blue committee. The arrangement of this floral audience chamber showed unmistakeable evidence of the presiding genius of Leila's luxurious ideas of lazy comfort, inasmuch as three peculiarly easy chairs had been carried from the breakfast-room and study into the conservatory, two of which were tenanted by Florence and Menie, while the Moorish maiden herself was enthroned on a pile of shawls and cloaks, with an enormous pot of double violets immediately under her nose, as she leant over her extempore divan from time to time to inhale their fragrance. Two large French lamps, with handsomely cut globes, cast a brilliant light over the pretty group; while the rich crimson and delicate white of the camellias, the deep green of the oranges and myrtles, and the varied hues of the numerous flowers, now in their premature bloom, rendered the whole spot as picturesque a scene for

the narration of a romantic tale as could possibly have been selected.

Darcy was duly introduced to his appointed seat, and installed in the third easy chair by Leila, who seemed to have constituted herself mistress of the ceremonies, and immediately upon taking his place was most emphatically adjured by that damsel to tell them all about it without delay, and above all things, without keeping any part of his story back.

"You do not mind my having brought Menie, do you?" asked Florence; "she must sooner or later hear what is generally talked about, and may just as well know the truth; besides which, I will answer for her secrecy."

"Oh, pray tell me if you would like me to go, Mr. Darcy!" said little Menie, timidly, "for I do not wish to intrude by any means; but I certainly should like to hear your story, if you have no objection, and I will promise to be very faithful in never repeating a word."

"Oh, yes, you may stop! mayn't she, Phil?" burst in Leila, impetuously; "now do begin, I'm all impatience!"

"You must know, then, Miss Montgomery," commenced Darcy.....

("A pretty opening for an explanation addressed wholly to me!" observed Leila, parenthetically.)

".....that I spent a great deal of my time when I was quite a boy with an old uncle who had amassed a large fortune in India, and who had taken a prodigious fancy to me for some reason or other best known to himself, which most certainly was not that I fell in love with him at first sight, for as a child I both feared and disliked him extremely. But certain *it is that* I was a great favourite of his, and spent *almost all my holidays* at his house, or that of Colonel

Mainwaring, whose daughter Leila I solemnly espoused when she was about two years old, as she herself can testify, and who has been one of my kindest friends all my life.

“I do not think I was ever what may be called dissipated, or fond of riotous company, but I certainly was rather giddy, and pleased with novelty and excitement, so that anything out of the common way had great charms for me. Amongst other strange fancies I had a perfect mania for feats of activity and strength, and was a most enthusiastic patron of acrobats, athletes, pedestrians, and so on, who are not generally the most respectable members of society I must allow, but who, nevertheless, in the majority of cases, have the sense to behave pretty quietly before those who give them no encouragement to take liberties. I mention this, not because my story has much if anything to do with such people, but simply to explain to you how I came to fall in with the family, who, unfortunately for me, are just now rather intimately intermingled with my destiny. I had a wager with a young nobleman at St. Agnes, at which college I stayed for a few days in the spring of the year, in which I competed with Charles Burton for the scholarship at St. Barnabas, the object of which was to produce a man who should be able to perform every feat which his champion could do, and one more, *i.e.*, that he should set him the example in some exhibition of activity in which the latter should fail; and having taken advice as to whom I should select in order to insure the best chance of success, I was recommended to go to a very obscure street in the extreme east of London, not very far from the river, where I was informed that I should find the sort of man I wanted. I went down accordingly to the address given me, and inquiring for Mr. Kinkel, found that he was at pre-

sent engaged at a rehearsal at one of the minor theatres, but would be back in less than an hour. The question then arose whether I would wait his return or come back, and an accidental circumstance turned the scale, and caused me to win my trumpery wager, by the sacrifice of a million times its value in happiness and enjoyment of life ever since.

"I was on the very point of turning away, after having left my address, with a request that Kinkel would call upon me the next day at the Huntingdon Hotel, when my attention was attracted by the entrance of a young lady of about seventeen, whose whole appearance seemed singularly out of keeping with that dirty, disreputable street, who brushing hastily past me with a slight bow in acknowledgment of my making room for her, tripped up-stairs as though anxious to avoid unnecessary observation."

"Never mind her beauty, and all that sort of thing, Phil!" quoth Leila, in a lackadaisical voice, which whimsically contrasted the pertness of her remark, "we know all about that already: she has hay-coloured hair, a complexion like a dirty white kid glove, faded eyes, a freckled face, and good honest, unpretending feet, to say nothing of smelling most dreadfully of chocolate; but come to the point at once."

"For shame, Leila!" exclaimed Menie, indignantly, "how can you speak so disrespectfully of any one whom Mr. Darcy evidently admired. I have no doubt that the young lady was very pretty indeed."

"None the better for that, my darling!" returned Leila, throwing a dead camellia at her, "that polybigamous animal there, to use the forcible expression of Kathleen concerning her last lover, who had four wives already in different parts of the world, owns to *having married me* years ago, so I have a right to be

jealous. I appeal to you, Floss; is it natural to see any beauty in your rival?"

Florence made no reply, but looked a good deal graver than the matter required, and Phil finding an end put to Leila's interruption, continued his story in the following terms: "I inquired the name of the lady, and was informed that she was the granddaughter of an old man called Peter Wohlgenuth, who lived in the upper story of the house, and dabbled in the occult sciences, viz., cast nativities, and so forth."

"Wrote leading articles in Zadkiel's Almanac, I suppose!" suggested Leila once more, but seeing Phil look really vexed and disconcerted, she promised to behave better for the future, and sinking back upon her divan, covered her face with her handkerchief, as a signal of having once for all subsided into silence.

"I was suddenly seized," proceeded Phil, "with an overwhelming anxiety to have my future fortunes read to me, and waiting for a minute or two, until I thought the young lady had quite reached her destination, I ran upstairs to the room of the old astrologer, and knocking at the door, presented myself as a pretended dupe to his professed science."

"And a real dupe to his concealed art," thought Leila, but made no demonstration of interrupting him, although a nervous twitching of her fingers betokened some little inclination to give her opinion once more upon the subject of his narrative.

"The old man received me very courteously, but with a dignity of manner I had not at all expected from a person, who, I took for granted, must certainly be a genuine charlatan and impostor; but I soon began to suspect, and I have never altered my opinion, that he had deceived himself quite as much as others, and that he was a sincere believer in many of

the grand theories of his science, although of course he could not have been so in the innumerable trickeries which he practised upon the credulous public who consulted him.

“ After a few commonplace remarks upon my wish to have a nativity cast, and having answered the usual routine of questions as far as I was able, and received a list of those upon which I must gain more precise information, if I desired his work to be very accurately performed, such as the hour when I was born, and a few similar details, I led the conversation to the discussion of the general principles of astrology, its history, biographical associations, and unequal distribution over different parts of the civilized world, so neglected in some, so earnestly cultivated in others ; not so much, as many persons erroneously imagine, in proportion to the knowledge and enlightenment of the countries, as in obedience to some natural law, which predisposes certain nations to its study more than others. For I am quite convinced that it is an accusation perfectly unfounded upon facts, to assert that a leaning to the occult sciences is necessarily a proof of either weakness of mind, or ignorance on the part of the believer. On all these topics he was unusually well informed, and I was sincerely interested in his conversation, so that I gladly struck up a kind of intimacy with him, which ended in my frequently going to his house. Although I did not see his granddaughter on the occasion of my first visit, it was not long before I was introduced to her, and there was something in the mingled romance and gentleness of her character, that won much upon me in those boyish, inexperienced days. It soon became a favourite resource with me, after the formal parties at my uncle’s house, which you may readily imagine were not very *amusing* to me, or the noisier revels of the young

men of my own age, which were almost as little to my taste, at least for any continuance, to slip down to the dismal dwelling of the would-be Chaldæan, and spend an evening in discussion with him, or in listening to the legends of the pretty Pauline, whose memory was plentifully stored with the wild traditions of her forest home. She sang too with all the taste and natural love of music so common amongst her countrymen, and volunteered to teach me some of the ballads I most admired.....”

(“Seven shillings a lesson, if you take half a dozen,” muttered Leila, under the cambric.)

“.....besides affording me an excellent opportunity of improving myself in her language, in which my school-taught accent was not very good, but now, as I flatter myself, it is.....”

“.....Villanously bad!” exclaimed Leila, jumping up. “You talk more like a Cherokee Indian, than a German, and as for your song to the tune of the ‘March in the Bronze Horse,’ it is exactly like the braying of a donkey.”

“That is not German at all, Lola, as you know perfectly well, but Magyar, a most uneuphonious language I must allow. But pray let me get on with my story, or I shall not have finished by the time when the gentlemen will be coming to the drawing-room for coffee. What my precise feelings were towards this young lady during the first few months of our acquaintance,” resumed he, once more turning to Florence, “I never could exactly decide myself; I certainly had no definite idea of marrying her, and as certainly had no dishonourable intentions either. I think that I was involuntarily, though no doubt very culpably, permitting myself to trifle in a very thoughtless manner with serious feelings, and that I never sufficiently took into consideration the end of all this

either one way or the other. But matters were brought to a crisis before very long by circumstances over which I had no control, and which, I hope, reflect no discredit upon my honour, whatever bearing they may have on my character for prudence.

“ During the winter, or rather early spring, of the year immediately succeeding that in which I first formed the acquaintance of Peter Wohlgemuth the astrologer, his daughter-in-law came to live with him, and by the increased comforts of the house it was easy to be seen, both that she had brought some means with her, and that she was inclined to spend her money in a much more lavish manner than is usually the case amongst so frugal a race as the Germans. But if there ever was a woman so pre-eminent in wickedness as to leave all her sex incalculably in the rear upon the evil road, surely Wilhelmine Wohlgemuth was that one, for seldom if ever was there any human being, whose vice, and horrible love of all that was bad for its own execrable sake, was less redeemed by any one glimpse of better feeling. I had soon sufficient reason to discover her irremediable vileness, from the negotiations which she speedily began to open with me, and the fiendish complacency with which, taking for granted that my visits were a foul disgrace to the house, she nevertheless encouraged me with the most unmistakeable professions of her perfect contentment with the present state of affairs. Finding, however, that I recoiled from a vice, made if possible still more repulsive from its native hideousness being thus openly unmasked, and perceiving that she was not likely to find in me the person she wanted, she suddenly became my bitterest enemy, and by constant misrepresentations and calumnies so worked upon the mind of the old man, that he treated me *with the utmost rudeness*, and finally forbade me the

house. I obeyed, as a matter of course, and for two or three weeks I neither saw, nor heard of Pauline ; but when at last her name was brought before me, it was in a manner which excited all my fears for her safety, and swallowed up in my anxiety to save her from deadly peril, all my proud indignation at the conduct of her grandsire, and her own weak and cold-hearted acquiescence, as I then regarded it, in his commands to renounce my society. I was staying at the time with my uncle in Portland Place, and Charles Burton was also with me on a visit, and we two were naturally much together upon parties of pleasure in which the elder gentleman took no interest, and in visiting the theatres, and other places of entertainment where he had no care to accompany us.

“ Amongst our expeditions in search of amusement, we went one evening to a masked ball at some public gardens, more to look at the dresses, and watch the dancers, than with any intention of joining the revellers, or taking any active part in the mummeries of the night. We happened not long after our arrival to be standing near a group of masquers, who were busily discussing a frolic which one of them had in hand, and to which at first I lent no attention, as it appeared to be one of those disgraceful affairs which one would rather not hear, and yet in which it is madness to attempt to interfere ; but after having heard a little more, I began to take a far deeper interest in the development of the plot, for I gradually became convinced beyond all doubt, that the conspiracy was one in which Pauline was to be the victim, and her wretched aunt her treacherous betrayer. I will not pollute your ears, Miss Montgomery, with the details of what I then heard ; suffice it to say, that the scheme was arranged with a diabolical cunning and a systematic calculation of the most effectual way

of attaining their ends, which rendered its success all but a matter of certainty. There seemed no hope for the unhappy Pauline except in immediate flight, and it did not appear particularly difficult to obtain her the means of escaping from the house in which she was at present lodged, but the grand question for deliberation remained unanswered, viz., what to do with her, after her voluntary desertion of her grandfather's roof.

“Reckless and headstrong as I was, the care of providing her a suitable refuge appeared to me a terrible responsibility, but I had little time for reflection, since my mind was made up as to one point, that she must be rescued at all risks, and I was half way back to her house, before my head was sufficiently clear of the whirl of emotions produced by what I had just heard to be able to argue rationally on anything. I had learnt from the conversation in the gardens that the crafty Wilhelmine was at present from home; indeed, that she would be by the time I reached the house at a place appointed her by the young profligate whose scheme I had overheard, for the purpose of concluding their final arrangements, so that the coast was quite clear as far as she was concerned, and as for admittance into the house itself, that was easily enough managed, by making a visit to Kinkel the acrobat, I before mentioned, as tenanting the rooms on the ground floor.

“I therefore determined to call upon this man, under pretext of finding him some new employment, and to try to attract Pauline's attention by noisily singing some of the songs she had learnt to identify with me, as I walked about the room below, and if this artifice failed, to risk the experiment of mounting the stairs, and seeking an interview with her. The former expedient, however, succeeded to a marvel, and hardly had I concluded

one stanza of my very first ballad, than I heard the door overhead softly open, and a light step creep down the creaking stairs to the dark passage which communicated with the street. I made some shallow excuse for leaving the room, which Kinkel received with a grin of coarse raillery, as if he had a pretty shrewd idea of my errand, and assured me that he had no intention of leaving his pipe and glass at the fireside, where he had established himself from force of habit, although it was the height of the summer. I therefore bade him a civil good-night, and joined Pauline, who was standing in a corner of the passage, dressed as though for a journey, and carrying a little bundle in her hand, but trembling so violently from head to foot that she would have fallen in her attempt to meet me if I had not given her the assistance of my arm. I then learnt that some vague apprehensions of the danger which surrounded her had seized upon the mind of the poor girl, sufficient to make her extremely anxious to free herself from the tyranny of her aunt, whose evil counsels had every day assumed a more open and alarming character. She had therefore been meditating an escape for some days, when my appearance at the house, which she had accidentally witnessed from the window, brought to a crisis her half-formed resolution, and hearing my voice raised in such an ostentatiously loud manner, she had taken it for a kind of signal, and had slipped down stairs to see me, and ask my advice in her present strait. She adjured me not to forsake her, but to carry her to some place of safety, and promised to supply me with such abundant proofs of the necessity of the step she was taking, as to satisfy her grandfather, and indeed all inquirers, that she was perfectly justified in all she had done to avoid the snares which environed her.

“*Inexperienced as I was, I could not for one instant*

be deluded by so vain a hope, as to imagine that the clearing up of such a very suspicious disappearance would be as easily managed as she seemed to anticipate, but the knowledge of the certainty of my actions being misinterpreted did not alter my determination, and making up my mind to take the consequences of what I was doing precisely the same as if I had really been guilty of that which would assuredly be laid to my charge, I bade the unhappy maiden be well convinced that I would never forsake her, or leave her to the mercy of her enemies, and escorting her to the cab in which I had come down, drove off, without more leave taking from the accursed house.

“I placed Pauline for the night in the house of the waterman who trains the boat-club to which I belonged, a very respectable fellow and quite trustworthy, whose mother, moreover, who lived with him, I knew to be a most decent and well-conducted woman; and taking especial pains to be able to show that I had never even entered the house in company with her, took my leave, and returned to my uncle’s, where I held a council of war with Charlie, which, after sitting nearly two hours, came to no more satisfactory conclusion than simply that it was a bad job, and nobody knew how it would end. The next morning I went down, in company with Charlie, to ask after the poor fugitive, and found, considerably to my relief, that she had already communicated with her grandfather, and had laid before him such a statement of her position, as to justify her in hoping that she should convince him of the innocence of her motives for leaving his house; more especially as a very brief reply which she had received by her messenger, appointing a meeting that very morning at her new abode, was couched in terms of more horror and grief ~~terrible~~ information contained in her letter than

either anger at her flight, or suspicions of the propriety of her conduct. In fact, it appeared evident enough that Wilhelmine, with all her power over him, had never won his confidence or his love, and that he gave entire credence to all that Pauline had said about her villanous conspiracy.

“Of the interview which shortly after took place I will say no more, than merely that we perfectly disabused the old man’s mind of all lingering doubts which he might have hitherto entertained of my honesty in the matter, and that he left us, cheerfully agreeing to do all that lay in his power to provide for his granddaughter in a respectable way, though he could not again take her back to his house, since Wilhelmine refused to quit it, and he dared not quarrel with her upon any account, a determination on his part, which no entreaty of ours could shake, though I exhausted all my powers of argument in striving to point out to him the cruel injustice he was doing to Pauline. I expected to have some trouble with his wretched daughter-in-law, but experienced none whatever, at least at the time; she seemed to have given up the game for lost, and to be disinclined to risk any exposure of her conduct by keeping the matter alive; for a coarse and insulting letter enclosed in a box containing clothes and other little personal property belonging to Pauline, which was forwarded to her new address, was all that we heard of or from her for a considerable time.

“Thanks to the kind and truly Christian interest taken in this ill-fated girl by an old clergyman, who was an intimate friend of my uncle, and who, while he gently pointed out the folly and ill-consequences of the idle taste for such adventures which had led me into forming the acquaintance, and plunged me into the dilemma upon which I now consulted him, did not

think it necessary to show his own moral superiority by allowing bad to glide into worse for want of a directing hand, Pauline was admitted into a family in Scotland, where her services in teaching music, and the two languages with which she was best acquainted (German and French) were accepted as a remuneration for her reception amongst them upon terms of reasonable familiarity, no salary being demanded, or even desired, our object being abundantly answered by providing her with a suitable home.

“The arrangement of our plans relative to her settlement in life naturally threw us more together for a while than even before, and my feelings long imperceptibly growing warmer and warmer towards Pauline, were now worked up by pity and enthusiasm to such a pitch, that I fancied myself capable of any sacrifice for her sake, and that I would willingly give up the whole world to purchase her an hour’s happiness.

“The good old rector, however, had made such an absolute point of my promising to form no engagement or in any manner involve myself in a way affecting my honour, in a matter of which it was possible that I might ere long think very differently, for a whole year at the least from the time at which his assistance was requested, that I was compelled to part from Pauline with no other vow than those of sincere affection and good-will; and well had it been for me, if my destiny had permitted a final termination to our acquaintance to have taken place at this period of my life. But I was not fated to escape so easily from the consequences of my reckless folly, and long before the period had passed by which my kind friend had so earnestly striven to ensure cool reflection by all the means in his power, the miserable folly of which I have now to speak had been committed, and had cast a *loom* over all my brightest hopes, and plunged me

into a punishment greater as it appears to me than I deserve, for I solemnly declare that, however appearances may seem against me, I was true to my promise, and nothing approaching to an engagement ever took place between us during the year specified, if it can be said to have ever existed, which I think very doubtful.

“ I happened to be staying the next autumn, or as I will for the sake of greater precision in the marking the dates of my story word it about two months after Pauline’s departure, in the immediate neighbourhood of an old school-fellow of mine in Scotland, who had recommended his native county as affording abundant amusement to a person so fond of fly-fishing and sketching as I am; and although I did not actually reside in the house of his parents during any part of the time, yet I was a constant visitor and frequent guest at their table, and a never-failing companion to the young people in their daily rambles. I here again fell in with Pauline, who had accompanied the family with whom she was living on a visit to some friends in the next village, and had already made herself extremely popular amongst the little circle in which she moved, so that she was invariably invited to join any excursion that was made by the surrounding gentry.

“ One lovely evening in September we were seated in one of the most romantic glens in the vicinity, having spent most of the afternoon in wandering about in search of the picturesque, and amused ourselves, as idle people will, with singing, telling stories, and playing at childish games of cross purposes, and so on, in which occupation we spent a considerable time; at last one of the party, who had been relating a wild tale, the scene of which was laid during the time when the bands of robbers who infested the immense forests of central Europe were a kind of nation in themselves, *living under fixed laws and recognised chiefs of their*

own, proposed as a merry jest to celebrate one of the woodland weddings with which her story had ended, and the gay party took up the suggestion with such apparent glee that I unhesitatingly yielded to their request when I was called upon to undertake the part of the wandering knight, who forsook the tilt-yard and the banquet-halls of his house for the forest life of the brigand's son-in-law. Pauline represented the bride, and everything was carried on with a solemnity befitting the occasion, but with no idea of any serious consequences following such a frolic.

“ The autumn passed away, Pauline returned home, and I also left Scotland, first for the pheasant-shooting at Monkworth, and afterwards to go into residence at Cambridge, and though a letter or two might have been exchanged, they evinced a diminution rather than an increase of the former love. The fact is, that the dissimilarity of ideas and prejudices between us began to tell upon our sentiments, almost immediately that we saw much of each other upon a familiar footing, and conversed unrestrainedly upon subjects which had never been broached in the house of the astrologer. Her thoughts with regard to society in general were not mine; her nationality of course met with no corresponding enthusiasm from me; her ideas of rank were incredibly absurd in my eyes, used as I had been all my life to a country where the superior classes in birth and standing are equally so in education and manners; in a word, our affection was dying of a decline, none the less fatal for being very gradual in its operation, and scarcely remarked by either party in proportion to the change it was working. We met again during the succeeding summer, and though in some respects our position was more decidedly that of lovers, inasmuch as the year of probation had expired, and my language assumed a less guarded tone, yet this

very change appeared to hasten rather than retard the progress of our disenchantment, for our difference of opinion now began to show dangerous symptoms of an actual rupture, principally owing to the irreconcilable discrepancy of her ideas and mine on the subject of her family.

"It appeared that several of her mother's relations had lately taken her up, owing to her apparent improvement in circumstances, and had filled her head with absurd ideas of the grandeur of her connexions by birth, who, though poor almost to starvation, and belonging to no very lordly sphere, according to English ideas, were noble and exalted in her estimation above any of us plebeian islanders through their long line of pauper ancestors. Stirred up to action by these good people, Pauline assumed a position I did not at all like, and treated my avowed intention of settling on the Continent, if we married, as a positive insult to her dignity. She disclaimed any wish to accept me on such terms, and declared that if I would not make her the mistress of my English home, and an integral part of my family circle, I had far better quit her altogether, and break off any further acquaintance; and as a pledge of my good intentions, she demanded to be introduced in due form to my mother as the bride elect."

Here a perfect shout of laughter from Leila, pretty plainly showed with what success she imagined that this experiment would be attended.

"You do not know my mother," continued Phil, looking a little disconcerted, "or you would share Leila's merriment, I assure you. But, however, finding that I was quite determined not to introduce her as she required, she took an occasion to do it for herself, and called at my uncle's one day while my mother was there, and demanded an audience. The details of the

meeting I never heard very exactly, but she reported to me in a letter that my mother had called her 'a young woman,' and had pronounced her visit to have been made upon the drollest errand of which she had ever heard, besides which, she had expressed a wish to transport her, which, I fancy, must have meant that she tried to induce her to emigrate by offers of money. As for my uncle, Pauline's indignation against him was more furious still, for according to her account he flew into a perfect paroxysm of rage, and made a speech, in which his lawyer, the police, an annuity, and an act of Parliament for imprisoning foreigners, which I conclude was the Alien Act, were all blended together in such a chaos that she could not disentangle them.

"The above-mentioned letter bade me adieu in a most tragic manner, and heaped upon the heads of the whole English nation a more violent weight of contempt and hatred than ever was heaped before by a person, who, to do her justice, did not use a single coarse expression, or in choice of language at all exceed the bounds of strict propriety. Nevertheless, as I dare say you have already anticipated, I took her part at first with all my might, and was in a fair way of making as complete an idiot of myself as ever mewed and howled in the sunshine, but luckily for me her wrath was unappeasable, except by such condign vengeance on my mother and uncle as I could never dream of professing to share.

"I was packed off to travel on the Continent, and while there was led by the demon of mischief into Hungary, where I totally eclipsed my late folly by an incomparably greater one, and spent my long vacation in assisting to overthrow the dominion of my own political sentiments, and to substitute in the place of a government excellently adapted to the circumstances *of the country*, a kind of national bedlam. I should

there have decorated a gibbet, or more probably a tree, since the before-mentioned tokens of civilization were rare luxuries thereabouts, had I not been rescued by Leila's friend, Marcellus Aurantius, whom you so libellously imagined to be a Pole, in consequence of his gift of Sobieski's stirrup. But by his kind aid I effected my escape, and returned to Cambridge in the most sedate manner to keep my terms.

"Till yesterday I hardly heard a syllable of Pauline, so you may imagine my surprise when I discovered to-day, that despite of her marriage in the interim, it is deliberately intended to turn that fool's play in Scotland into a sad reality, and to return upon my hands as my legal wife your German singing-mistress, Madame Krummacher. And, moreover, from a letter I received from her this morning, there appears to be great cause to fear that the story she intends to tell will be supported by such unscrupulous false witness on the part of a friend of hers, who was present at the mock-ceremonial, and is so plausible in itself, that it is more than likely that I shall find myself involved in an affair of the most fatal consequences to my peace of mind. My tale is ended; and now, dear lady, I ask you fairly and honestly, am I not to be pitied, as well as blamed, for my share in this miserable history of folly and recklessness?"

Florence made no reply, but her large eyes filled with tears, as the whole tone and manner of the speaker evinced how entirely his happiness hung upon the sentence she should pronounce. She read with woman's instinctive tact the real sorrow at his heart; she knew as perfectly as if she had heard it expressed in words that the misery of which he spoke, and which he more than hinted had been entailed upon him by the consequences of his past folly, was no other than a gloomy sense of *the gulf* thereby opened between his new-born love

for her and its happy confession, and she longed to comfort, yet she dreaded to express the sympathy she felt, from fear of appearing bold in the eyes of one whose good opinion she now began to feel beyond all self-concealment was dearer to her than praise had ever been before. She sate, then, quite silent, and almost immoveable, gazing stonily on the ground before her, and not daring to lift her eyes to the imploring face which she well knew was turned to her for pity.

Leila rose lightly and noiselessly from her recumbent posture, crossed the conservatory, and tapping Menie on the shoulder, with a low whisper, drew her into the garden, and thence by another door into the drawing-room. No sooner had the children withdrawn, than Darcy, unable to control his feelings, rose from his chair, and kneeling on one knee before that of Florence, poured forth his grief in his usual impetuous manner.

“O dearest lady! Florence, hear me! have you no pity for me, no comfort? you know—I feel that you must know—the reason why this is such a crushing blow just at present. I acknowledge that I have no right to speak thus, but I feel as if my heart were bursting, and must unburthen itself; if you have no hope to give me, have you no solace, no support in this terrible affliction?”


Florence was greatly moved, and it was with the utmost difficulty that, repressing her rising tears, she replied to his passionate appeal. “I will not pretend to misunderstand you, Mr. Darcy,” she said, in a low voice, “and this is no time for coquetry or affectation of mock prudery; hope I cannot give you, and upon the subject to which you allude there must be an honourable silence at present; but as for solace and support, be assured that you shall lack no aid which Florence Montgomery can render to strengthen you

to bear your fate as a gentleman and a man of honour should. Now let us return to the drawing-room; yet leave me awhile, and do not accompany me back. I shall see you often, I trust, as the best and truest of friends, and once more, I repeat, you shall have all my most hearty wishes and earnest anxiety for your happiness and prosperity."

"You pity then my misfortune more than you blame my folly?" cried Phil, eagerly.

"I do more," murmured Florence, softly, "I recognise in your whole story the kind and generous heart, whose sorrows excite sympathy, and not only the pity which we accord to the wretched, even though injured by their own vices."

Phil bowed low over the delicate hand extended to him in token of regard, but did not press it to his lips as he longed to do; then quitting the conservatory by the same door as that by which Leila had disappeared, strolled up the garden to cool his burning brow and re-collect his thoughts ere he once more returned to the every-day world around him, and the wearisome details of the impending election.



CHAPTER XVI.

ANY WOOD IS GOOD ENOUGH FOR AN IDOL IN YELLOW LAND.

WE will now leave our friend Philip to assist in the Cabinet Council of the Blue Committee, and to arrange the numberless petty though important details with which every contest must necessarily be accompanied, and transport ourselves to the magnificent dining-room of the Earl of Trimmington, whose second son, the Honourable Augustus Tomnoddy, having received an appointment under the revised ministry, has virtually vacated his seat for Midhampton, and as soon as his resignation has been officially announced is about to solicit the honour of re-election at the hands of the Yellow constituency. And, in some respects, the company here assembled is deserving of closer attention and deeper interest than that which is sitting in deliberation at the house of Mr. Montgomery; for whereas the latter is composed almost entirely of men in most particulars most monotonously alike, being all quiet, unassuming, everyday country gentlemen, the present party is formed of components as various and dissimilar in class, habits, and appearance, as though they had been selected for the express purpose of supplying representatives of every shade of society.

Seated at the head of his hospitable board, which is sparkling with plate and Bohemian glass of the costliest kind, and groaning beneath the weight of the splendid appointments, and loaded with every delicacy *in and out of season*, is the lord of the castle himself,

a handsome, gentlemanly looking man of about sixty years of age, with a mild and engaging countenance and dignified appearance, somewhat strangely at variance with the party assembled round him, which contains many a guest one would hardly have expected at that noble table. Universally liked and respected, as regards his own individual character, and throwing into the scale of his party no little influence from his own merits as a landlord, a magistrate, and a neighbour, he was, nevertheless, considered in a public point of view by the gentry of the vicinity a most dangerous and mischievous person, as harbouring and encouraging, with an unlimited belief in the pureness of the motives of all who talked grandly of the good of mankind, many of the most disaffected and evil-disposed persons in the whole county. But this was so generally attributed to his single-hearted confidence in human nature, and his inability to comprehend any base hypocrisy being masked under a show of patriotism, that amongst the many enemies of the politician, there were none of the man.

He was supported, on the right, by a gentleman of a most dubious profession, if profession indeed he had at all, since it was very difficult to define it, whatever it might be. The unlearned affirmed that he "was a trustee," and gained immense wealth by the exercise of his lucrative calling, but this was manifestly an error, as the labours and risks of trusteeship, as every one knows, are in very unfavourable proportion to the possibility of gaining anything by the office. Others announced most confidently that he was a banker, but if so, in what town? and as his name most certainly was not visible in Hannay's Almanack as being concerned in that avocation, this supposition also fell to the ground. But sure enough it is, that he lived *somehow*, and very comfortably too, despite of his

being a man of no hereditary property, and unsuccessful even to bankruptcy in the only pecuniary undertaking in which he was ever known to have been engaged. And it is no less indisputably true that the rumours as to his profession of a trustee were so far founded upon fact, that he was the guardian of no less than four orphans in his neighbourhood, who had been confided to his care by persons reposing the greatest confidence in his discretion and probity.

After what I have said of him, it will surprise no one to hear that he was a great oracle in the religious world of —shire, and that no public meeting upon any of the polemical subjects of the day was complete without him; in fact, the offices which he filled as secretary, treasurer, auditor, president, deputy, and so on, to the different societies for several counties round, would fill a couple of octavo pages if duly enrolled with all the pomp and ceremony they deserve. But in no capacity was he greater than in that in which I now present him to the reader, as, "Chairman of the Midhampton Association for the Extinction of Prelacy," a society in which he shone with all the lustre of a solitary star, as Mr. Dwight, who ran him hard in public favour at many of the other meetings, was excluded from competition here by the fact of being a churchman and a Blue.

For it is worthy of record, that no aversion to the episcopate however violent could obtain admission to that band of crusaders, unless the candidate were as yellow as the last stage of jaundice; and if his political disorder happened to be choleraic, and tinged the features with the azure tint of which they entertained such a profound horror, no quarantine in the world could more rigidly exclude him from any risk of infecting their righteous community. While on the *other hand*, provided the tie of "colour" existed

between himself and the Association, he was eligible to all the honours of a distinguished guest, even although he was an open adherent of episcopacy; in token of which, the greatest amity reigned between the person I have just described and his opposite neighbour, who although he was a clergyman, and consequently no avowed enemy to the three orders, to say the very least, was a much-cherished ally of the bishop-hating fraternity. This is not the first time that he has been mentioned in our history, distant as is the scene of his first introduction to us from that in which we now find him, since the sleek and portly vicar of Little Potter's-field, though having in the interim passed triumphantly through the chrysalis state of expectant college-fellow, and eater of toads to Her Majesty's Ministers, into the full grown butterfly of a beneficed clergyman, and chaplain to an earl, is no other than the Mr. McKenzie of Philip Darcy's early career, whose spirited vindication of the character of the modern great ones against the slanderous comparisons of that learned youth had cut off the budding honours of Phil's scholarship and crowned the labours of Charles Burton with the prize he sought.

He had been tutor to Augustus Tomnoddy, and even now had partial charge over his younger brother Walter, whose studies he superintended during Eton vacations, with a sort of roving commission to keep him in proper order. In acknowledgement of these services, he had been presented to the vicarage of Little Potter's-field, a snug little parish, the tithes of which were commuted for an estate of good land, and well placed for the village—in fact, perfect of its kind were it not for one very great drawback, viz., that it was too snug, and lay within a smaller ring fence *than was considered indispensable to its beauty by its*

owner, fond as he was of a comely compactness. He kept his eye therefore on an adjoining parish, the incumbent of which was both old and infirm—in fact, as Mr. McKenzie poetically remarked, “The sands of that faithful labourer’s life were fast running out through the hourglass of Destiny;” but whether the said glass was unusually full of sand and took a long time emptying, or whether Fate neglected to shake it from time to time after the fashion of children impatient for their holiday, or whether in return for the unflinching labour in which he had spent the morning, noon, and early evening of his useful and blameless service, he was permitted a prolonged and peaceful twilight to watch with grateful eyes the swelling fruit on the vines he had tended with such pains while strength remained to the work, or whatever the cause may have been, certain it is, that he still lived on, and displayed himself, as he was wheeled about in his bath chair amongst the cottages of his parishioners, in involuntary satire on the vanity of the hopes which Mr. McKenzie had formed on the occasion of his very first visit to his new clerical acquaintance.

And what rendered this incomprehensible clinging to life of his infirm neighbour yet more unpalatable to the vicar of Little Potter’s-field, was the fact that the presentation to West Langley did not absolutely belong to his noble patron, but was redeemable by an honour-bargain between him and Sir Magnus Oliphant, from whom it had been bought, and there was every fear that Darcy, having possessed himself of the estate belonging to the Hall, would ere long lay his hands upon the living also, in which case the reverend gentleman had a doleful suspicion that his chance of obtaining the preferment was very small. He had taken an opportunity indeed of calling upon Darcy when he first made his appearance a day or two

before our story opens, and was received with all the politeness which Phil never neglected to display to every visitor, but without any cordiality or apparent inclination to renew the acquaintance. He attempted to jest, with an affectation of frankness, which he well knew how to assume, upon the matter of the scholarship, but without eliciting the faintest smile in return; he complimented him upon his irreproachable steadiness and respectability of conduct at the University, but again he received no encouragement to proceed; the gentleman addressed merely remarking that he had never found any pleasure in being either a drunkard, or a hero of street disturbances, and that he had never found college discipline any check upon such amusements as he cared for, especially as the authorities of St. Barnabas had removed the interdict upon going to Newmarket, which he was willing to confess was a restriction more worthy of the intellects of the Wise Men of Gotham, than those of Greece. As for driving tandem, he always took off his leader at the nearest turnpike to the town, according to the statute in that case made and provided; and the suppression or discouragement of billiard playing was imperatively necessary, unless Cambridge was to be turned into a hawking ground for sham captains and foreign counts who knew no language but their native English.

The parson then made a vigorous effort to see whether a judicious change of politics would avail him, and dropped some ghostly hints about the propriety of the leading men in a neighbourhood being selected to represent it in Parliament, irrespective of their political bias, and unshackled by too many pledges beforehand. "In fact," he concluded, grandiloquently, "the sentiments of a good and honourable *man will themselves* be good and honourable, and our

principal care should be to elect proper persons to fill so important a position as that of legislating for a great nation, and leave far more to their own discrimination than we do at present."

"Certainly," replied Darcy, "I quite agree with you, upon the whole, in what you say, but as consistency is one of the indispensable qualities of a public man, it is unavoidable that we should continue to elect those men, and support that party, in whose general policy we repose the most confidence; I am no great friend to such frequent changes of opinion as may tend to prevent our statesmen from knowing how they stand."

Repulsed but not defeated, the persevering Mc Kenzie made another move, which he fancied, and justly, too, would bring matters a little more to a crisis, and permit him to judge of his ultimate hope of success.

"You will, I presume, Mr. Darcy," said he, in an oily voice, "become a formidable opponent to his lordship in his hold upon the borough: with your wealth and liberal expenditure you cannot be otherwise than an object of great interest to many persons, who are compelled in duty to their families to bow their personal prejudices to those of a gentleman by whose patronage they support their business; for no bias of our own I think you will allow, ought to interfere with our obligation as Christians to be grateful and ever submissive to those who have been appointed to us."

Phil's face was turned as he was thus addressed, and he was busily engaged in making the fire, which renders it very probable that he did not distinctly hear the last remark, more especially as he had engaged with his old hat under his arm, and his eyes were fixed upon the fire, and his mind was wandering.

irrelevant to the tenour of the parson's oration, that his thoughts must have indeed been far away from that excellent man.

"And the little bird said, 'But I won't be a stew,
And my giblets shan't make you a little pie too,' "

chanted Phil in a low voice, as he tapped an aspiring coal rebukingly on the head; but softly as his musings were uttered, they were loud enough to reach the thirsting ears of Mr. McKenzie, who emitted a warlike cough, and drew himself up in his chair.

"I beg you pardon for being so absent," said Darcy, turning round; "may I offer you some luncheon after your ride?"

"My young pupil is at home for the restoration of his health and I am never absent from his mid-day meal when such is the case," quoth the enraged schemer; "I have the honour of wishing you good day."

"A dios!" said Phil, cheerfully; "I think you are quite right never to take lunch at an inn if you can help it—the cold meat is hardly ever good, and the wine villanous. I am going to the Priory myself, only I should have postponed my call if you would have favoured me with your company here. My compliments to the Earl and Gusty."

So saying, he accompanied his clerical visitor to his horse with the utmost politeness, and returned in full song; and on this occasion the connexion between his thoughts and his ditty was evident enough:—

"So this old chap to the Castle did go,
To tell the Earl a part of his woe;
Likewise to tell him part of his grief,
In hopes the Earl would give him relief!"

Meanwhile the Vicar was trotting off to the Castle, bursting with rage, and humbled by a sense of having been seen through most translucently, and having now converted into certainty his worst fears, he no longer halted between two opinions, but made up his mind to spare no pains to wreak a salutary vengeance on the unlucky offender. He entered with even greater warmth than heretofore into his alliance with the Antiprelatists, and on the occasion when we now present him to our reader, had paid a Dissenting minister the delicate compliment of refusing to say grace before dinner, when an elder brother in the mission was present to take precedence of him. And poor Lord Trimmington, touched almost to tears by such a trait of Christian humility, was more than ever enchanted with his good fortune in securing the services of such a preceptor for the wild and head-strong Walter.

I must pass over many of the other guests, or let them speak for themselves as occasion demands, and so become their own chroniclers and describers, and come at once to the hero of the meeting, the infant placeman now soligiting re-election, the Honourable Augustus Tomnoddy himself. He was a rather handsome, but affected and monstrously over-dressed, young man of six or seven-and-twenty, with the flippant, self-confident manner so unmistakeably denoting the fluent but superficial speaker, and the everlasting smile of affected humour and smartness which also accompanies that character to a most aggravating degree.

His father, whose eldest son was unhappily a moping idiot, insensible even to the taste of his food or the most palpable changes in the objects around him, considered Augustus as a perfect prodigy, *perhaps from the reaction from his first bitter disap-*

pointment, and like the virtuous Cornelia, who dubbed herself the mother of the Gracchi, in preference to her legitimate and rational appellation, would have been well pleased to be known wholly and solely as the father of Augustus Tomnoddy the great and good ; nor was that youth held in much lower estimation in many other coteries, especially at meetings, where speeches are measured like Cambridge butter by the length, and not weighed by their solidity ; yet this appreciation of him was not universal even in his own family. His brother Walter, who thought of him as an Etonian very naturally would think, that he was the very greatest spoon in existence, declared that he put him so vividly in mind of an example in the Latin Grammar, that he was once saved from a flogging by the sight of his brother's name having suggested the passage he was vainly attempting to remember.

"By George ! sir," said he, relating the occurrence, "it was the nearest thing you ever saw, but I caught Gusty's name on an old Virgil, and I out with my example in a minute—'Satis eloquentice sapientiæ parum,' says I, for I'll be hanged if I ever heard a fellow with such a gift of the gab, and with so jolly little to say when it's all told ; he don't make speeches, he creates them, according to Floss Montgomery's catechism-book, for they are brought into being out of nothing at all."

And his uncle, Major-General Everton, an old Peninsular officer, whose white hair and venerable countenance gave little external evidence of the fiery, dashing spirit still burning within him as gallantly as of old, regarded the accomplished Augustus with much the same feelings as those which a gardener entertains towards a caterpillar, as some uncomfortable creature apparently invented for the express purpose of blight-

ing the prospects of better people, since by the exaggerated favour in which he was held by his father he stood terribly in the way of the rattling, impulsive Walter, who was the especial darling of the tough old soldier.

Not that the young man was by any means ill-disposed by nature, or devoid of talents of a certain kind; for he was quick of observation in many respects where his vanity did not blind him, had a very fair idea of elocution, had read a good deal, and devoted himself with more than average success to the statistical branches of political economy, which formed the strong points in his speeches; but he was inordinately conceited, and greedy of applause from any quarter whence he could obtain it, which weakness he dignified by the name of ambition; he was a profound humbug, both by nature and, thanks to Mr. McKenzie, by education also, which he called being shrewd and fit for the world; he did not care a pin by what means he obtained his character for penetration, and had no scruple about quoting authors whom he had never read, or statistics which contradicted him point blank when appealed to, upon the chance of the company who were being enlightened by his wisdom never finding him out, which he flattered himself was moral courage and readiness; and last, but not least, he committed the fatal error of imagining ends justify any means, and of considering a temptation to achieve his purpose by unworthy resources a stern necessity, against which there is no struggling; of self-respect he had not a vestige, a statement not as inconsistent with what I have said about his conceit as it might appear at a casual glance, for though he could not bear to think that any other person suspected him of an imperfection, much less a glaring fault, he bore *with the most stoical* indifference the self-consciousness

of not really deserving one quarter of the praises which he nevertheless hoped to receive from society at large, by a skilful veiling of his worst points, and a corresponding exaggeration of his best qualities in their most striking light.

He had been returned for Midhampton on the occasion of the first vacancy after his coming of age, which happened to fall in during the very year of that happy event, so that he had the advantage of an early start in public life, besides the numberless facilities afforded him by his connexion by birth with many leading members of the family cabinet. He was a most useful adherent of his party, and in extremely literal truth a very promising one, for if ever there was a necessity for conciliating any one, or staving off the opposition of any body of malcontents by vague assurances of benefits to come, which were destined to remain for ever in the future tense, Augustus Tomnoddy was sure to be selected as the messenger of good tidings, and his Utopian visions were as naturally described, and the foundations of his castles in the air were laid with such a business-like air of reality, and all the little details attended to in so scrupulous a manner, that it was hard to believe that a scheme so carefully devised could possibly be a mere sham after all, just as we feel disposed to give credence to an alteration in the kitchen sink of our neighbour, while inclined to be sceptical concerning the tropical hot-house he rather thinks of adding next autumn to the Blue drawing-room. And more than one member, rigidly bent upon reducing public expenditure, has been persuaded to vote for the most barefaced jobs, from the salutary terror instilled into him by the dexterous Augustus of some imaginary counter-scheme of extravagance, which was never dreamt of by any *other brains than those of the imaginative ministerialist.*

Some confiding moralist has left behind him his serious conviction that "truth is great and will ultimately prevail," but if he had been honoured with a clear insight into "the Honourable Augustus Tomnoddy, his acts and motives," he would far rather have put his trust in the cynical, but none the less wise, axiom of school-boys, that the royal road to success lies through a strict adherence to this golden rule, "Tell a good lie, and stick to it." But whatever may have been the cause of his rise, certain it is that Augustus rose like a balloon, probably from the same reason, and that at the time of which we speak was appointed to an office under the renovated government, which was now making a kind of spasmodic effort to stagger on a little longer, though with about as much real vitality in it as a decapitated duck, which being set upon the ground by a philosophical cock runs up the yard with unimpaired vigour for a few seconds, and then suddenly falls prostrate with its poor fluttering wings kicking up the dust in expiring pangs. And there, dear reader, sits our honourable friend at the bottom of his father's magnificent table, cutting up a pine-apple, and gently blowing the dust of humbug into the eyes of servility, and portioning out to his adherents houses and lands, and men-servants and maid-servants, in an Utopian kingdom of his own creation, with an unctuous generosity beyond all praise, sparing no promises of his services during his whole tenure of a power which he well knows would never have been given to him had it not been notorious that a year's possession was the extreme limit of possibility.

"You see, my dear friend," said he, to an honest looking tradesman, for whose son he had promised to provide, but whose unsophisticated ideas of right and *wrong* were unable to comprehend with sufficient clear-

ness the hair-splitting distinctions of his patron, "there is such a thing as bribery and corruption, which is very disgraceful, and foreign to the very nature and spirit of our glorious constitution, and there is also such a thing as rewarding meritorious services to the state, as well as to individuals, by bestowing the patronage of the country on those who show their love for her by their zeal in supporting her true friends; and here lies the immeasurable gulf between Blue corruption and Yellow gratitude, which our shameless adversaries ignore, and have the hardihood to maintain that it is just as bad in us to provide for your free and independent citizens posts of honour and profit for their sons, as it is in them to cast to the mercenary varlets who cringe at their tables the food which justly belongs to the suffering people."

The fat grocer tried to look as if he understood all this, but although he was not at all a stupid man, he was a remarkably honest one, and as blind as a bat to all the plausible arguments of unprincipled cunning, so he failed miserably in catching the meaning of his noble patron, and only appeared more hopelessly bewildered than before.

"Now, imagine for one moment," continued Augustus, "that you have just been told that this morning a man met with a violent death at the hands of another, that other having been incited, or even directed to do it by the third, would you not be filled with horror and indignation against the murderers? yet, what else is the fact of a malefactor being condemned to death by the judge, and executed by the public officer appointed for that melancholy duty? Do you now blame the deed, or pass any censure upon the person by whose orders it was done? No, certainly not. But why? Because his crimes deserved punishment, and his fate was the meed of his own wicked-

ness ; so it is here most manifestly proved that the character of the person to whom the injury is done makes all the difference between right and wrong ; and if to rob a private person of a little paltry money be so terrible an offence as to exclude the perpetrator from the sympathies of his kind, what must it be to rob a people of its rights and liberty ? if to extinguish life in the mere body be so terribly avenged, what shall be the doom of him who destroys the life of advancement in a nation ?”

“ H-m,” quoth the trader, “ that sounds pretty enough, but it would be a rum world if the police went about the country shooting every one through the head whom they suspected of being none too honest, and a very queer state of things if the new ministers begun their office by hanging the old ones.”

“ Again, my good friend,” recommenced the fascinating Augustus, “ we reward good children and punish bad ; we shut out the froward and disobedient from the paternal heart for their evil dispositions, and we cherish the good with little presents, and make an open distinction between them and the others.”

“ No, no ! Mr. Tomnoddy, we don’t do anything of the sort,” burst in the honest fellow, “ that is the very way to make hypocrites and sneaks, and regular bad ones of them ; it is, indeed ! I have no little Johnny Goodchild, whose heart bleeds for the wickedness of his brothers amongst my family, I can tell you ! I never caught any of them turning up his nose at the others but once, which was after a sermon of Parson McKenzie’s, upon Joseph and his brethren, and then I gave him such a taste of a stirrup-leather, besides making him clean all the shoes for a week, that I put an end to that game in quick time, and he’s as modest as may be now.”

Augustus was a little disconcerted at this flat denial

of his grand argument, but recovered himself quickly, and now came to the point much more openly than he at first intended to permit himself to do.

"The plain English of the matter then is this," replied he, descending from his stilts into very practical language with prodigious celerity, "that if men serve the government they have a right to expect favours from it, and as for myself, no one shall ever say of me with any truth, that he found me ungrateful for any good turn he may have rendered me!"

"Well, that is speaking fairly enough," returned the grocer, and a buzz of admiration of the generous lordling ran round the bottom of the table, while assurances of the most devoted service poured in from all sides into the gratified ears of the Yellow candidate.

Mr. McKenzie now rose to propose the health of his excellent pupil of former days, and honoured friend of the present, Mr. Augustus Tomnoddy, and begged the company to pardon his inflicting on them a few remarks upon a subject connected with morality itself in such a manner, that he should hardly be doing his duty as a Christian minister, if he omitted to mention it, as having so important a bearing upon the imperative necessity that all good men should unite to support his virtuous young friend on the present occasion, as a testimony of their esteem of his private character, as well as public talents for business.

"The candidate who has come forward to disturb the peace of the borough," said the worthy parson, "and who desires to excite an unfilial rebellion against the paternal authority of that noble peer, who has indeed been a father to us all—this candidate, I say, has been this very afternoon detected in having behaved in the basest possible manner to a poor, unprotected, foreign lady, whom he had sought out in her peaceful home, and made a victim to his unprincipled arts. He

inveigled her into what was meant by him to be a mock marriage in Scotland, but which the prudence of her friends converted into a real one, and having tired of his plaything, as these profligates will, ruthlessly cast her away, and left her to struggle with the world as best she might, uncheered by a single act of kindness from him. Led away by some fatal error as to their true policy, her friends did not acquaint her with her real position until it was too late, and rendered desperate by a sense of her wrongs she had already linked her fortunes with those of an old admirer, who generously offered her his hand in her deepest distress. The confiding husband, however, thus cruelly deceived, has at length become aware of the real facts of the case, and now insists upon returning to her lawful protector the infatuated girl whom he had thus married, and I am sure you will all join in my disgust at Mr. Darcy, when I tell you that the most peremptory denial of her claims, and refusal to right her in any manner has been returned to her appeals for mercy and consideration. Are these things to be borne? Are virtuous and moral men to be represented by such profligates as this shameful deceiver? Perish the ignoble thought! let us rally round the banner of virtue and religion, the untarnished Yellow flag of all that is great and noble, and let every man as he records his vote for the Honourable Augustus Tomnoddy, lay to his soul the well-deserved conviction that in so doing he has advanced the cause of all mankind."

As he concluded, amidst a volley of cheers and a most deafening uproar of fists beaten on the table with all the vehemence of pavours' rammers, the obtuse Mosely, who, poor man, in the honesty of his heart, thought so good a Christian as the parson must be anxious above all things to hear a fellow-creature *vindicated* from a heavy charge, and that he could not

possibly have intended to circulate an untrue report about an innocent person, rose abruptly from his seat, and disregarding the furious tugs at his coat-tails with which his nearest neighbour attempted to reseal him, burst into a defence of the accused party, to which his straightforward, manly justice and good feeling lent an air of almost dignity, for the sentiments of a man who tells the truth and shames the devil, with a brave contempt of all underhand proceedings, can never lack impressiveness, rough though his eloquence may be, and unadorned by flowers of language or propriety of gesture.

"That is all a mistake, my lord and gentlemen!" said he, "or at any rate it is exceedingly doubtful, and you had better wait a little longer and see more about it before you act upon it. I beg your pardon, Mr. Augustus, if I'm giving any offence, for Mr. McKenzie is scowling at me as if I wanted to insult you, but I mean no harm at all. What I have to say is this: I have heard all that story about Mr. Darcy before, and I am almost sure that my version of it is the right one, and if so, you would be sorry enough to have done that poor young man any injustice when you come to hear all about it. The marriage in Scotland was all a bit of fun, a sort of boyish lark, or bit of play-acting, and nobody ever thought anything about it, till some great blackguard got hold of it, and set on that German fellow to make mischief. And Krummacher is a regular bad one, you may depend upon it, if ever there was one, and it's a nasty, dirty concern altogether, and as sure as can be if you meddle with it you'll be sorry for it.

"We don't agree with Mr. Darcy in politics, I acknowledge, and I think myself that he is more in his proper place when he is hunting and shooting, and *hanging up fine pictures at the Hall*, than when he is

in the House of Commons making laws for a great country, especially since he is such a very young gentleman, and is still at a kind of school, and wears a gown like the parson there, and a queer little cap like a slop-basin on a tea tray, and is hunted with bulldogs if he goes out without his outlandish costume, which I think is very unworthy of a free-born Briton—but that's his concern! However, though we do not want him in Parliament, we have no need to be spreading slanders and telling all sorts of ridiculous lies about him, for want of inquiring into the real truth. So I've just made free to tell you all about it."

However complimentary this speech may have been to the good feeling and justice of the company to which it was addressed, it was received with the most unmitigated disapproval; the Honourable Augustus being too paralyzed with horror at this unexpected demonstration of a mutinous spirit in one of his stanchest adherents to be able to express his feelings; while another gentleman gave vent to a sarcastic recommendation to the speaker to look out for some other trade for his son, since it was abundantly evident that he would never eat her Majesty's salt; and several persons proposed, in their righteous indignation, to 'turn him out,' and groaned as if they had been attending some moving discourse of John Bunyan.

But Mr. McKenzie's wrath took a more dignified, if no less alarming form, inasmuch as he then and there proceeded to lash with the scourge of pastoral objurgation the offending wretch who dared to doubt the crime of a man who ought to be guilty, who must and should be guilty, and therefore was guilty. Never had a black-hearted, villanous lover of wickedness disgraced the world adorned with the virtues of the clerical orator, as that poor, fat, respectable, old grocer, *Mosely*, whose character for honesty, charity, and good

temper had been as well-known over all the town as the parish pump for more than five-and-twenty years ; never had the pure ears of good men been defiled by such a flagrant, indecent sympathy with vice and immorality as that which had lately been displayed by this gross offender ; and never had it been a more imperative duty to try a man by Jedbury law, viz., hang him first, and investigate his case afterwards, than in the present instance of Darcy's supposed profligacy ; for if he were not guilty they could not very conveniently punish him, or excite any prejudice against him ; and if he was not punished by loss of character and diminution of popularity, the good cause would lose an excellent opportunity for aggrandisement, which was a thing in itself ridiculous, and not to be thought of for an instant ; wherefore it stood to reason, that to hesitate to avail themselves of the fortunate occurrence which had put their enemy in their power was manifest folly or treachery, most probably the latter. " The most dangerous approach to vice," the excellent pastor concluded, " is through palliation of it, or sympathy for its temptations in others. That step, I grieve to say, has now been taken by a man, whom heretofore I have always held to be a right-minded and virtuous citizen."

Augustus Tomnoddy " followed suit " as soon as the clerical hero had finished, and taking the line which had been chalked out for him in so masterly a manner by his predecessor, proceeded to announce, in his usual bombastic style, that there was no longer any necessity, or even propriety, in conducting the election upon grounds of mutual courtesy, and evincing the least politeness towards their antagonist ; but on the contrary, it was desirable to make their abhorrence of his profligacy as marked as possible ; for he felt it *his duty* to proclaim to all his supporters, that he now

opposed Darcy, not only from political differences, but also upon principle, to free the town from the disgrace of being represented by so worthless a young man ; so he called upon his adherents to rally round him with all the greater enthusiasm, for knowing that his adversary deserved no quarter whatsoever.

“*Judex damnatur, dum nocens absolvitur*,” said he, as he concluded a long, mischievous, and frothy speech, which was applauded to the echo by all the company except old Mosely and the Earl himself, who like the poet’s hermit, “though he spoke like a sage, yet he felt like a man,” viz., though he spoke and voted like a Yellow patriot, yet he felt like a gentleman, and entertained several twinges of compunction at this disgraceful mode of procedure ; of which beautiful sentiment of the classic author, I will give you a free translation in these words—

“ But whoe’er recked or how, or when
The prowling fox is trapped and slain.”

Thus was a pretty stick cut out of the hedge to beat that son of all dogs, Philip Darcy ; and thus amidst a tumult of applause, did the noble Augustus, metaphorically speaking, blacken the face of poor Mosely, and parade him round the city on a lame jackass, with a herald crying before him “ Thus shall it be done to the man whom the Yellow Committee delight to dishonour ! ”

CHAPTER XVII.

FORTUNE HAS STRANGE WAYS OF SHOWING HER FAVOUR.

THE next two or three days passed over without any event at all worthy of record having occurred to interrupt the monotony of the personal canvass, to which Darcy was condemned in prosecution of his design upon the seat of Mr. Tomnoddy ; unless, indeed, an epistle from the redoubtable Krummacher may be considered as such, in which he first defied his enemy to single combat, and afterwards requested an answer by return of post, stating the amount of pecuniary compensation which he was willing to make for the assault committed on his august person by John Sobieski. To such of my readers as may have any curiosity upon the subject, and may desire to know at what rate the noble German valued his own skin, I beg leave to announce, that the demand was considered so reasonable for the first-rate article supplied in the shape of exercise for Hans, that it was cheerfully paid by Darcy the same evening, and a cheque for twenty-five pounds, being the three hundred florins, at which the scion of aristocracy rated his damages, delivered into his baronial hands by the colonel's groom.

The proceedings respecting the supposed marriage were for the present entirely confined to the attorneys on each side ; and Pauline had now taken up her abode with Mr. Whiting, to await the conclusion of the investigation, which, it was tolerably well understood by both parties, was to be carried out without

favour or compromise upon the fair merits of the case. Krummacher either was, or pretended to be, perfectly convinced of the justice of his cause, and displayed no inclination to take back his wife, or come to any terms, though Mr. Owen, who arrived by express immediately upon the receipt of Phil's letter, had repeatedly offered by the direction of his client the most extravagant terms, to obtain a straightforward, open confession of the imposture, and to settle the matter once for all, in a manner decisive of the perfect freedom of Philip Darcy from further claims.

And on the other hand, nothing could be more decided than our hero's refusal to make the affair one of compromise, or concealment, since he maintained most vigorously, that if the marriage were a valid one, it was just as disgraceful to contract a new alliance with the consent of his former bride as without it, and that the ability to compromise the affair would not make its merits one iota the greater, as the hostility of the lady in question would not render it a bit worse. If they would openly confess that the whole statement was a conspiracy to extort money, and acknowledge his freedom from his pretended contract, he would settle a handsome annuity upon them as soon as everything was satisfactorily arranged; if not, the affair must take its course, and it was a matter of comparative indifference to him, what provision he eventually was compelled to make for the wife thus palmed upon him, supposing the suit to be successful, since it was not his money which he cared to save, but his right to form a new marriage.

Thus then stood the affairs of the much-worried Darcy in this direction, and cheerless enough they looked; but we have now to speak of a crisis in his political fortunes, which beginning with sufficiently *bad auspices* as it did, nevertheless proved an ex-

tremely fortunate circumstance for his Parliamentary hopes. It is not only in the vegetable creation, that the snows of winter, the winds and dust of March, and the drizzling rains of April, produce in greatest abundance the flowers of June, and the harvest and fruit of autumn, but the same result of good coming out of apparent evil is also observable in the every-day occurrences of life, and it not unseldom happens that we owe the weightiest debt of gratitude to both persons and events, whose intervention was, at the time, in the highest degree unpalatable to us. And, in good truth, if any one had pointed out to me on the day of which I am about to speak, the torn and dirt-bespattered dress of Philip Darcy, his bleeding face and head, and limping gait, betokening rough usage in the way of kicking or beating, lately administered to him, and had told me that he was a very fortunate young man, and had this day received a windfall of unexpected good luck, I should have been extremely tempted to question the accuracy of the assertion, unless indeed my informant were speaking in a religious sense, and simply meant that overweening pride had got a fall, and a lesson had been administered to him, which he would not easily forget. Yet it was perfectly true that a wonderful amelioration in his political prospects had taken place, wholly and solely in consequence of the brutal treatment he had received, and he had already won a very useful friend in a person who had come many miles to oppose him with all his might; the working of which operation I shall presently disclose in its proper place, but must now proceed to chronicle the adventure itself.

He had been out for a ride across the moor with the three ladies, of whose equestrian propensities the reader is already aware, and having left Florence Montgomery and her pet Menie at the gate of the

Manor House, he was riding back with Leila at a brisk canter, discussing the chances of Charles Burton's degree with respect to the two or three most formidable antagonists (a subject in which his companion was almost as much interested as himself, for Charlie was a very popular fellow wherever he went), when their attention was arrested by an enormous concourse of people assembled round a kind of extempore platform, on which some itinerant spouter was holding forth to his listening audience with great apparent vehemence of gesture, and angry violence of speech.

Darcy, who was very inexperienced in such matters, and had hardly ever been in the North before, except indeed an occasional visit to Doncaster during the race week, supposed the crowd to be engaged in attending the lectures of some wandering preacher, who was announcing the destruction of London by earthquake during the ensuing month, or some ranting folly of the kind, and was disposed to take no notice whatsoever of them; but Leila, who better understood the ways of the neighbourhood, and had often seen these things before, pronounced it immediately to be a strike meeting, which was common enough amongst the felt manufacturers of the town, or else some Chartist harangue upon the rights of man in connexion with the forthcoming election. She therefore implored Darcy to return to the Manor and wait till it broke up, or at any rate to secure assistance in case of annoyance, as there was no little danger of a serious riot. This, however, he stoutly refused to do, declaring that he should never be able to show his face again in society, after having been convicted of running away with his tail between his legs at the sight of a few hundred working men assembled round a tub on a common, who, after all, might be as peaceably disposed towards *him*, as *he* to them.

"I will ride back with you, Leila," said he, "within sight of the avenue gates, if you like, or even see you safe within the doors of the Manor House, but as to shirking this mob myself, I could not think of it." And as he spoke he turned his horse's head to accompany her back, but met in return with as flat a refusal to take his advice on the part of his fair companion, as he had given to her prudent counsels at the first.

"If you will not go back then, Phil," cried the high-spirited girl, "neither will I, for my society can do you no harm. However violent a north country mob may be, when excited by their lecturers against those whom they mistake for oppressors, they are not made of the same cowardly stuff as the wretches who will assault a defenceless woman, and I am more likely to be a protection to you than any clog. So now for a trial of their temper."

And before Phil could prevent her from carrying her intention into effect, she was cantering up to the crowd before them, which was now breaking up into smaller knots, and apparently in a most excited state, to judge from the uproar of angry voices amongst them. Darcy spurred after her at full speed, but as by her unexpected movement she had obtained a considerable start of him, he did not overtake her until the rash girl had plunged into the very thickest of the crowd, which receiving her with hoots and groans of the most furious nature, nevertheless opened to let her pass without a symptom of intention to commit any actual violence. But as he himself approached, he heard abundant proofs of the correctness of Leila's apprehensions for his safety in the exasperated roar of the mob, and brave as he was by nature, and far from being untried in scenes of peril and strife,

he half repented his hasty rejection of her prudent advice.

But it was too late to think of that now, so holding his horse well in hand to be ready for any emergency, and grasping his hunting-stock tightly by the lash end, to allow full swing for the buckhorn handle to ring scorn on the heads of his assailants, he rode fearlessly into the ranks of the enemy, singing according to his incorrigible habit when either amused or excited the warlike ditty of Friar Tuck, as recorded in the merry tale of Maid Marian :—

“So laugh and sing, and sing and laugh,
And so go forth to battle!
For the crown of a head and the end of a staff
Do make a ghostly rattle.”

The truth of which he was very soon destined to experience in his own person, for no sooner had the mob permitted him to penetrate deeply enough into their body to surround him to advantage, than they set upon him, like wolves upon a wounded deer, and showered their blows upon him as thick as hail. Phil fought like a very Paladin, with all the objectless courage of an Etonian and a Cantab, not so much from any definite hope of forcing his way through, as from the instinctive desire to resist to the last, which is possessed more or less by all young men of any spirit; and more than one of his assailants bit the ground under the vigorous applications of his hunting-stock, which he wielded with all the dexterity of an officer in Görgei's dragoons, accompanying his blows by choice Magyar shouts which mightily puzzled and discomfited the foe, before he himself was unhorsed by the fall of Queen Mab,* and found himself completely in the power of the exasperated mob. And *that power they seemed disposed to use very ruth-*

lessly, for our unfortunate friend now found himself converted into a kind of football, and passed from one man to another, by the most uncomfortable locomotive process of being rolled over and over with hearty applications of hob-nailed boots, while every attempt to rise was followed by such ungentle pats on the head as to convince our hero that his safest plan for the present was to lie still.

To add to his dismay, he perceived that Leila, discovering his danger, was returning to what in her girlish enthusiasm she imagined to be his assistance; but by the violent manner in which she was attempting his rescue, was only endangering her own safety, as she had now contrived to irritate the crowd beyond their previous endurance. Finding that they would no longer make way for her to come back, she had dashed her spirited chesnut in among them, and instigating him to kick and plunge as madly as possible by all the means in her power, had actually fought her way half through the mob, before they had sufficiently recovered their surprise at this daring attempt, to bar her further progress. But their blood was now up, and though, to their honour be it spoken, not a hand was raised to strike her, many a grip was being made at her bridle-rein to pull down the savage horse, who goaded almost to madness by his resolute mistress, who well knew his insuperable objection to being touched just behind his saddle, and was not sparing of the exercise of that knowledge, lashed out with his hind legs, and fought with his fore, with all the fury of a wild beast. It seemed almost beyond all hope that no serious accident would occur, and Darcy was on the point of making up his mind to rise at all risks, and to make some effort to preserve his imprudent companion from the consequences of her rashness, *when the welcome sound of a cavalry trumpet rung*

loud and shrill over the heath, and the clank of scabbards and heavy tread of the advancing horse-hoofs announced to his assailants, as well as to himself, that assistance was close at hand, and that it was high time for the rioters to disperse before the dragoons were upon them. The mob broke up in wild affright at this alarming interruption of their proceedings, and fled in all directions over the moor, to escape detection; while Darcy, staggering to his feet, and hardly half in his senses, felt his hand seized in the friendly grasp of Captain Devereux, without whose assistance it is not improbable that he might once more have saluted mother earth.

"It is a lucky thing," remarked that son of Mars, "that I chose this way to return to the town, after giving my fellows a little practice in riding over rough ground, an art in which they are at present rather more deficient than is agreeable to the taste of General Hurricane, who inspected us a week ago; for I honestly believe, that if we had not come up when we did, they would have reduced you into a shapeless mass of members, instead of a single one of the British Senate, as I trust you will be before the end of next week."

"By my honour, I think so too!" replied Phil, "for they have marvellously disorganized my domestic economy as it is, by kicks and thumps, better adapted to the necessities of a dusty carpet than the human body; but it was all my fault, I must candidly own, for neglecting Leila's advice, who prophesied that there would be a smash if I insisted on passing them. I had no conception, however, that the Yellow gentry were so savage, and am still at a loss to comprehend this extreme violence, especially in a borough which *is contested* as a matter of course almost every election, and where both members are at present nominees

of a nobleman, and so cannot very well be considered the chosen of the sovereign people, enough to render my opposition an act of unbearable rebellion against tyrannous King Mob."

"To tell you the real truth, Darcy," responded the Captain, "the committee of your antagonist has done itself the pleasure of circulating such a mass of lies and slander against you and your motives, that the uneducated people who hear them with all the relish for the horrible and disgraceful, universal among the vulgar, are more to be pitied than blamed for the violent and irrational prejudice at present excited against you, but which I have no doubt will pass away before long as rapidly as it arose. Poor Lord Trimmington is a downright fool, Parson McKenzie a hypocrite and a scoundrel, and Augustus Tomnoddy all three, so you can hardly wonder that a slander, supported by such a triumvirate, has taken great hold on the minds of the people, who unhappily drink in calumnies with thirsting ears, however deaf to the voice of him who defends their victim upon grounds of common sense."

Talking on this and similar topics, the two young men rode briskly along without taking any particular notice of their fair companion, who ambled quietly by their side in a silence very unusual to her, until a slight stumble on the part of the chesnut unseated, to their great astonishment, the skilful little equestrian, who had so lately sate her horse as though cut out of the same block with it; and Leila, who had merely kept her saddle from mechanical habit for some minutes, but before whose eyes a dark mist had been gradually gathering, and a deadly faintness creeping over her heart, fell as heavily and senseless as a lump of clay, and evinced no sign of life or motion, although she had received from her struggling horse, which her fall had brought to its knees, a severe kick on the

shoulder, which, under other circumstances, would have been followed by a shriek. To dismount from Queen Mab, and raise his pretty favourite in his arms, was with Phil the work of a moment, though in his present bruised condition, the task of carrying her was almost too much for him, light as she was; and slowly and mournfully the little cavalcade re-entered the court-yard of the Priory, where Leila was delivered into the care of the housekeeper, and Phil put into port to repair damages, like some gallant frigate after an engagement, while Captain Devereux rode off to report progress to Mr. Montgomery, and to read in the bright eyes of the fair Florence, the thanks he had so easily earned, for his services in rescuing her lover from the unscrupulous administration of Yellow Lynch law.

Nor let my readers, I beg of them, consider it unnatural in the dashing dragoon, that he experienced pleasure in the idea of presenting himself to a young lady he extremely admired, as the friend in need of the favoured swain, who, he was quite convinced, had made no slight impression on her heart; for, in the first place, a very warm regard between persons of different sexes, quite unconnected with the sentimental nonsense almost universally confounded with it in the world, is not at all uncommon, and Captain Devereux was by no means a marrying man, and was far more likely to fall desperately in love first, and be converted into a Benedict afterwards, than to plunge into an attachment merely from a desire to settle in life, which is no very rare case: secondly, he was not a man to sink into any very extravagant state of despair about a lady, who manifestly did not care for him; so that, although Florence might have caught him, had she so chosen, as easily as she could have *gathered a camellia* in the greenhouse, by merely

showing the least inclination towards him ; yet, as it was, he made himself tolerably comfortable under his present circumstances, of having her to talk to, copying music and embroidery patterns for her, and so on ; and like a wise man enjoyed the flowers of summer without overmuch thought of the winter that must come at last. Finally, being an honourable-minded young fellow, but fearfully connected in money transactions with the Jews and other harpies of the kind, he honestly thought it no very overwhelming proof of his disinterested affection, to wish to sacrifice to the claims of his numerous creditors, his lady-love's handsome fortune, and the many little luxuries to which she had been accustomed from her earliest childhood.

So Florence remained in his eyes a kind of Koh-i-noor, a jewel most delightful to look at, and much to be desired by persons fit to compete for the possession, but as much out of the reach of his longings as the moon herself ; while, at the same time, the pleasure of bringing her tidings of an agreeable nature, or such as might cause her to smile on him with approbation, was a tangible satisfaction in which he might safely indulge. It was with a clear conscience, therefore, and with the reasonable expectation of an excellent reception, that he now took his way to the Manor House, where his arrival was greeted by an invitation to dinner, and succeeded by a very pleasant evening, as his manly generosity of feeling, if not the heroic nature of his services, most certainly deserved.

Darcy, after a hasty cabinet council with the Colonel and Mr. Dwight, who was summoned at a moment's notice to give his assistance to the deliberations at the Priory, in which it was agreed that the presence of the Blue candidate was now rather a drawback, than *the contrary*, took his departure for London, to con-

sult Mr. Owen on the matter of his marriage, and thence to Cambridge, where he had promised to join his friend Charles Burton, in time to be present at the publication of the class lists, as well as to see him take his degree on the eventful Saturday.

He took a very affectionate farewell of his pet Leila, who was lying in great state upon the drawing-room sofa, and instructed her to diligently gather a bouquet in the conservatories at the Hall to present to Florence every morning, and to do her spiriting effectually as well as gently, an injunction which the little damsel received with great zeal, faint as she was, and promised to make love as his deputy with a vigour which could not be surpassed even by the disinterested affection which a young Irish cornet had paid to her aunt Dosy's estates, till he discovered their slight peculiarity of paying no rent. Upon leaving his faithful ally, Phil next found time to pay a flying visit to Mrs. Burton on his way to the station, in order to encourage the widow and her daughter to look cheerfully forward to the report of the examination, and so having settled his business for the present to the best of his ability, set off for town to settle the plan of action to be adopted towards Pauline.

So farewell for awhile to Midhampton and its denizens! We must now return to the university town in which we commenced an acquaintance which I should be pleased to think, dear reader, would be pretty lasting.



CHAPTER XVIII.

THE PRIVATEER SAILS FOR YELLOW LAND UNDER FALSE COLOURS.

“WELL, Charlie, how has the last week passed with you, old fellow? and how near to the end of your voyages into those horrible books, full of all sorts of unchristian and weird-looking symbols and letters have you got now?” inquired Darcy, as he entered the reading-room of his college friend, and saluted him, in true university fashion, with a nod as apparently careless as if they had parted an hour before. “I suppose you got my letter after your bed-maker had done with it, and as I write pretty large and distinctly, and old Mother Bricks is a dab at handwriting, from long practice in reading all the notes that come to her masters, I should think it must have reached you by the second day, at any rate.”

“Yes, I received your letter, Phil, on Sunday evening; and as I happened to meet the porter myself, as he was coming back from the post, Mother Bricks has not had the benefit of your communication, which, all things being considered, is not much to be regretted. But I cannot tell you how sorry I was to hear that disagreeable story about Pauline, not but what I take for granted that it will soon blow over, and will not do any permanent harm. You seem in better spirits too, than I expected, so perhaps something has turned up since you wrote, which has *tended to allay your fears*; if so, pray tell me all

about it, for I am quite as anxious for you now, as, a week ago, you were for me."

"Well, then, Charlie," answered Phil, throwing himself negligently into an easy chair, and putting his feet, like a Yankee, upon the mantelpiece, in affectation of carelessness that he did not really feel, "I will proceed to unburthen myself to you, in as logical and reasonable a manner as such an incredibly preposterous affair will allow, and try to make you comprehend the precise position in which I am placed. I deem it unnecessary, as pompous old Paley would begin, to acknowledge that I am in a most desperate state of distraction about Florence Montgomery, because I have seen her, and as to see her, is to admire her, and to admire her as she deserves, is to fall in love with her, and to fall in love with her, is to rave about her, for there is but one sun in the heavens, and one Florence upon earth....."

"A very unscientific remark that, Phil," said his friend, parenthetically; "the heavens are quite full of suns, to many of which our poor little bit of a thing is a mere midge. Why, a national school-boy would know better than that now-a-days—and you are going to be a member of Parliament!"

"Well! the world is not full of Florences, at any rate," retorted Phil, "and a man who would mar a simile to stick to dry, philosophical facts, deserves....."

"To be senior wrangler, Phil!" laughed his friend. "'Tis my vocation, Hal,' but proceed with your explanation."

"Now, joking apart," resumed Darcy, "my attachment to Florence Montgomery makes a very important difference in the serious aspect of the affair. Were it not for this, I entertain little doubt that I could make very easy terms with these people, or if *the worst came to the worst*, it would be no such fatal

tie as it is now, to know that one had to pension off a woman, whose atrocious conduct throughout this abominable conspiracy completely absolves her victim from all consideration towards her. I could then make it a mere matter of money, and it would signify, comparatively speaking, little more than losing a few thousand pounds at Epsom, or fooling it away in any other absurdity; but as it is, I hardly dare think of what the consequences may be to me in case of failure, for all my heart is set upon dear, bright, glorious Florence, and if I cannot have her, all the rest of the world is good for nothing to me. One comfort is, that there are always plenty of good, stirring rows going on amongst the votaries of the religion of Peace, in which a man can throw away his life in a decent and honourable way, and I suppose that I must seek an engagement under somebody or other who wants desperate service, an unhealthy station, or an untenable military post preferred."

"I trust things have not come to that yet, Phil," replied his friend, in a soothing tone. "You will live to marry Florence, and to be the leader of your party in the House, yet, I both hope and predict. But in what has Pauline personally behaved so badly? I fancied that she was not so very much to blame, beyond a little jealousy. What has she done?"

"Simply this, Charlie: she has added to my trouble the aggravation of a disgraceful slander against herself, as well as me, of so incredible a nature, considering her own share in the dishonour of it, that had she not herself confessed that she had made the declaration, no evidence could have induced me to believe it possible. The lying scoundrels who have cooked up this story against me, pretend to say that the marriage was a kind of pious fraud on their part, to cheat me into redressing her wrongs, and Pauline

has deliberately avowed her willingness to confirm, upon oath, the correctness of the suspicions which led to this step. She shamelessly, as well as maliciously, lays to my charge conduct which palliates the fraud committed on me, while it covers me with disgrace, whether I win my cause or not, and enlists on her side all the sympathies of the hearers or readers of the case, as though this monstrous proceeding had been suggested by amiable motives, even though it may have been somewhat unscrupulously put into execution. I am not aware that this part of her malice against me has yet been evinced in any public manner; indeed, I think that if it had been, I must certainly have heard of it, and moreover, that Florence would, in that case, hardly have treated it as a lamentable piece of boyish folly, but nothing worse, which she evidently does now, without a suspicion of my honour. But out it will all come eventually, I presume, and I shudder to think what an overwhelming proof of my guilt this confession of her shame, by the very person most interested in concealing it, must appear to the pure mind of an English maiden, who could no more believe it possible that an innocent person could accuse herself of such an offence, than that a man would wilfully convict himself of murder at the Old Bailey, although he was perfectly guiltless of the slightest violence to the unhappy slain."

Charles in vain attempted to lead his friend to enter a little more into the details connected with the chances for and against him, as to ultimate success in his suit, but the poor fellow's whole thoughts were so entirely concentrated upon the bearing which the story might have upon his favour with Florence, and he apparently cared so little for any other view of the *affair*, that *Burton* was compelled to give up the at-

tempt in sheer despair, and to listen with deep pity and interest, but with very scanty comments of his own, to the dejected conversation of the once merry Darcy, whose joyous heart seemed just now crushed to the very earth. It was, therefore, with a vague sense of relief, not so much of a selfish nature, as partaking of a hope of a seasonable diversion to the melancholy of his friend, that he heard a step ascending the stairs towards his rooms, which promised a temporary interruption to their mournful conversation, and which he trusted might have the effect of turning the tide of sad thoughts, which now overwhelmed the entire soul of his kind-hearted companion. Nor was he mistaken in this presumption, for no sooner did Darcy hear the tap at the door, which betokened the arrival of a third party, before whom, in his proud self-respect, he considered it almost a degradation to appear cast down about anything, however serious, than his whole demeanour underwent a complete change, the careless, good-humoured expression returned to his face, nor would the most rigid examination have detected a single trace of that desolation of spirit which had so lately reigned over every feature.

The intruder was no other than the Jem Farren before mentioned in this history, but changed most prodigiously for the better, both in dress and in general appearance. His suit of black, and neatly tied silk neckkerchief, patent leather boots, and kid gloves, displayed a somewhat striking contrast to his slang costume, when we first made his acquaintance, and strange to say, he seemed, with his change of externals, to have adopted an equally radical reformation in his manners also. He saluted the two gentlemen in a very quiet and respectful way, and waited with his hat in his hand for an invitation to sit down, instead of lounging up against the doorway as usual, or

plumping himself into the nearest chair without waiting to be asked to take a seat, which formed his two favourite modes of action, by which any one accustomed to his ways could tell at a glance in what estimation he held the owner of the rooms; the first being his invariable habit with those whom he called "swells," amongst whom Darcy held a most distinguished place, and the latter being as universally selected by him in the rooms of "gents as wanted a rat or two, or a brace of birds." But neither of these courses did he adopt on the present occasion, but appeared a most exemplary and reformed character, as taking the seat to which he was directed by Darcy, he proceeded to open the business upon which he had come.

"I received your letter, Mr. Darcy," he said, "and I call it uncommonly handsome of you to offer to pay that money, when it is not going to be used for the purpose for which we meant it; and as I should have had to spend a pocketful of it to buy the votes, it's a rare job for me; but I'll get you the seat nevertheless, you see if I don't, and in a way that you won't object to either. I'll earn my money as sure as a cross-bow, and that's about the surest thing for killing pheasants all quiet and respectable that I know of, and what's more, it shall be managed quite legally, and the Yellow fellows shall have all the disgrace of the blow-up, if there's to be one. I know all about how to tackle it, and will do it as snugly as you could wish."

"Well, how are you going to manage it, Jem?" inquired Darcy.

"This way, Squire, and it's a rattling good dodge, too," replied the dog-fancier; "it's a sort of circumventing of them, and what I call catching their legs *in their own hangs*. They don't know me down at

Midhampton, for Bob has not been there very long, and I have never been to see him since he went northwards, so I am safe of not being recognized. Now, I'm going down on a little bit of masquerading, like them members of the swell mob, who pretend to be foreign marquesses, and I'm going to bribe a lot of them to vote for Tomnoddy, and then when they come to poll, I shall be down upon them like a hawk, and the election will all be smashed to bits, and you'll walk over the course, like a horse for the Queen's Hundred. I've got my eye on my men, and I am sure that I can do it as easy as can be ; so they'll be obliged to give in, for fear of blowing upon the story, for I'm a Dutchman if I haven't begun by collaring young Tomnoddy himself."

" Indeed !" said Charles, laughing, " then you have made a good start, I must confess. But I do not very clearly see how you have contrived to bribe Mr. Tomnoddy to vote for himself."

" Not exactly, Mr. Burton ; I should never dream of telling a learned gentleman like you such a pack of rubbish as that, let alone Mr. Darcy," replied the flattering Jem, " but I have a letter from him in my pocket, giving directions about bribery, plain enough for a blind man to read without spectacles, and if that is not collaring him, I don't know what is ; for all his votes will not do him a farthing's worth of good, after the evidence I shall get against him by the end of the week."

And the redoubtable Jem pulled a letter out of his pocket, or rather produced it from a very smart little cigar-case, and forthwith plunged into its contents with all the complacency of a man who feels that he has achieved a master-stroke of policy. It ran as follows :—

“ ‘DEAR MR. PARTRIDGE—I received your favour of the —th ult. in due course of post, and should think myself very deficient in gratitude to you for your zeal in my behalf, if I did not reply to it without an hour’s delay. Let me thank you, moreover, for your confidence in me, displayed in your offer to advance the money necessary for our purpose, for which, however, there is no necessity, since the Society for Rewarding Merit amongst the Labouring Classes’ (I call that a jolly good name for a bribery club, Squire) ‘will cheerfully defray all costs, in which I hope you will not permit any false delicacy to prevent you from including your own time and trouble. I think your own plan a very good one, as being so easy of explanation to our committee, viz., that a fixed sum should be allotted to each voter, according to his station and importance, and will draw you up an estimate by the time that I have the pleasure of seeing you, by which you will be able to see precisely how we stand. I shall also put you in the way of how to get at every man’s weak side, of which a stranger can hardly be as good a judge as a person living on the spot, not forgetting several voters who are indebted for various sums to my supporters.

“ ‘And here I will give you a little hint, which may be useful in your canvass, and upon which you cannot begin to act too speedily. My antagonist, Mr. Darcy, has got himself into some silly scrape, by allowing himself to be entrapped into a sham marriage in Scotland, which I have taken care to represent in the most unfavourable light, and which, cleverly handled, may injure him very seriously. A good blow at a man’s character is a very telling thing, and it will be our own fault if we allow it to slip out of our fingers.

“ ‘*I think that a few judicious remarks about his*

indecently open attentions to a Miss Montgomery, who lives in the neighbourhood, and some well-directed shafts of virtuous indignation against her family, for encouraging the addresses of a married man, might have an excellent effect, and possibly prevent her father from taking too important a part in the election, which would be a great point gained, for he is a very dangerous man, owing to his property, and set of antediluvian prejudices, which he calls high principle. But enough of this for the present. I shall look for your arrival with anxiety, and until then, beg to remain

“ ‘ Your obedient servant,

“ ‘ AUGUSTUS TOMNODDY.’ ”

“Jem!” cried Phil, impetuously, as the former concluded his letter, and folding it neatly up, replaced it in his pocket, “you may spare yourself the trouble of going to Midhampton, for I will have nothing to do with the election. I wash my hands of the whole concern, and will never more meddle or make in public affairs, in which the most successful man appears to be he who is least fettered by scruples or a sense of honour. I have promised not to resort to bribery, and the person who persuaded me to take that course” (“Heaven shield her sweet face!” murmured he, as devoutly as if speaking of some fair saint) “was quite right in so doing, for how can we perform the mission of our class, to elevate and refine, if we only lead others astray. Cursed is he that leadeth the blind out of his way! and cursed amongst all honest men ere long, I humbly trust, shall be these base panderers to all the worst and weakest feelings of the people.” Here he paused abruptly, remembering that his remarks, however true in themselves, were somewhat wasted upon such a hearer as the illustrious Jem.

“You never mean to say that you are really going

to give up your election for a bit of rubbish like that, Squire!" said that worthy, incredulously. "There's always something of that sort going on at such times, especially if you're a Blue; but a few hard words break no bones. Don't be down in the mouth about it, Mr. Darcy! we'll bring you in safely enough, and then it will be your turn to laugh at them."

"It is not my own affair, Jem," replied Phil, hastily, "and being very courageous at another person's expense is not in my way at all. No; I shall certainly give up all idea of standing, and shall write to Mr. Montgomery this evening to withdraw my address as a candidate, and to recommend the immediate substitution of himself, or some other fitting person, to whom I may give the support of such interest as I may already possess. I have no right to trifle with the feelings of another gentleman, and to draw down these disgraceful insults upon his head, to suit my own ends. So now let us hear no more about it, for I am sick of the whole concern."

And as he concluded, he took up a newspaper from the table, and pretended to be engrossed in the contents, as a signal that the conference was now at an end, and that Jem, like the martial Othello, had found "his occupation gone." So the crafty personator of Mr. Partridge prepared to take his departure, very much crestfallen at this unexpected termination to his visit, and had reached the door without any attempt upon Darcy's part to detain him, when Charles Burton laid his hand on his shoulder, and leading him into the passage at the top of the stairs, carefully closed the door behind them, and recommenced the negotiations upon a footing far more agreeable than the former to Jem's present frame of mind.

"You had better go down to Midhampton," said *he*, "*precisely the same as if Mr. Darcy had never*

threatened to resign. He is very much put out just now, and no wonder; but all this will pass off before long, for I am quite convinced that Mr. Montgomery will not wish to give in to this coarse abuse, but will, on the contrary, advise him by all means to brave it out. You leave all this to me, and I will undertake to produce Mr. Darcy on the nomination day, as eager to win his election as his friends could wish; meanwhile, you play your part as you propose, and be sure to give Mr. Tomnoddy time to go to his hole and gorge your bait."

With which sporting piece of advice, which he suited to Jem's taste and comprehension with some little innocent art, he dismissed him to the buttery, to discuss a tankard of ale, and returned to his incensed companion, Philip Darcy, whom he found at the writing-table, deeply immersed in a letter to Mr. Montgomery, informing him of his determination to resign, and his reasons for doing so, and concluding with a declaration, that he would never again revisit Midhampton until this miserable dilemma had been brought to a favourable termination. If he failed, the letter went on to say, in establishing his perfect innocence in the matter of the pretended marriage, he should travel in the East for an unlimited period, and in all probability never be seen again upon British ground; if he succeeded, he hoped to have many opportunities of thanking his friend for his hospitality. As we shall hear of this letter again at the place of its destination, we will pry no further into its secrets at present, but allow Darcy to seal it up and direct it, in as perfect privacy as he preserved on this occasion, even to his friend Charles, who usually shared his unrestricted confidence in everything, however important.

"There lies the death-warrant of my Parliamentary

existence," said he, with a mournful smile, "murdered before it came into being by the ruthless hand of Augustus Tomnoddy, or rather his slanderous tongue, for which I hope to bring him to a pretty sharp reckoning some day, when I get a convenient opportunity, which will not mix up Florence's name in the matter if it come before the eye of the public. And now let us have supper, and a game at chess to clear our brains, which, as far as I am concerned, are rather addled, whatever they may be on your part. So I dare say I shall play execrably badly, but to that you must be inured by this time by long experience in my frailties of strategy."

So saying, he peremptorily put an end to all condolences or inquiries on the part of his friend, and insisted upon letting things take care of themselves, at any rate for the present, asserting, with great truth, that if they were to break their hearts over them ever so much, not one moment of suspense would be shortened thereby; while keeping up a stout heart, and looking on the brighter side of the question, might serve the double purpose of intimidating the enemy by a show of confidence, and husbanding his own strength and energy for the actual trial, which must be near at hand.

And Charles, upon his part, was sufficiently convinced that Mr. Montgomery would be no party to Phil's resignation, to feel quite easy upon the score of his friend's reappearance at Midhampton; and as for the marriage, his inexperience in such matters led him to greatly underrate the perilous position in which Darcy now stood, so that he readily coincided in this cheerful treatment of existing circumstances, and lent all the aid in his power to make the evening pass pleasantly; nor did it once strike him, until he *was again alone*, that his interest in Phil had made

him totally forget; during the whole of an evening which he had dreaded for months, that the next morning was fraught with the most important results to himself, and that ere he again retired to rest, his fortunes for life would be assured, or a disappointment of the most painful nature have dashed to the ground the bright hopes he had ventured to raise of his university success.



CHAPTER XIX.

THE THUNDER CLOUD SHOWS ITS SILVER LINING.

THE eventful fortnight of the examinations was now over, and the exciting morning of the publication of the class lists had at length arrived. It was arranged by the friends, that Darcy should go down to the senate house alone, and that Charles should await his return with the official declaration of his place in the tripos, in the freedom from observation afforded by his own rooms, that he might be able with the better air of fortitude to bear any disappointment that might possibly be in store for him. As no idea, however, of his being senior wrangler had sufficient hold on the minds of either to produce the least vexation if he were not, although Phil had some visionary hopes that it was just within the limits of possibility that he might be so, and as Fortescue's break-down had prodigiously lessened the danger of his being defeated by more than one antagonist, the messenger of Charlie's fate was enabled to go down to inquire into the state of affairs with a tolerably easy mind, as having little dread of bringing back evil tidings, and some little hope of being the bearer of glorious news of unexpected success, surpassing the brightest anticipations of his friend.

The first person whom he met amongst those who were bound on the same errand as himself, was the unhappy Fortescue, who had come down in person, *rather from a nervous desire to know the worst with-*

out longer uncertainty, than from any lingering expectation of having a creditable place. All his jaunty affectation of sporting fashion had entirely vanished, and his agony of suspense defied all attempt to conceal it; nor, indeed, did he make any parade of indifference to his position, but poured out all his bitterness of spirit into the first ears that he could find to hear them, with all the genuine desolation which feels a comfort in the very fact of giving vent to the sorrow within.

"What a horrible fool I have been, Darcy!" said he, bitterly; "I have thrown away all my chances in life, to pretend to be what I never really was, and never shall be. I thought that it would be such a fine thing to be senior wrangler, or even second, without appearing to be working for it at all; and going on from one folly to another, I gave that accursed supper party, when that lubberly brute, Robson, made a dead set at me to make me drink: and this is how it has ended. I am utterly ruined now, and hardly know what will become of me."

Darcy could not help thinking that this violent attack upon Robson came with a singularly bad grace from the speaker, but this seemed hardly the time to say so, for he could not lift a hand against the fallen, however wrongly he might have behaved or however deserved his misfortune. So he tried to comfort the poor fellow as well as he could, without any allusion to the past, and to point out to him that it was not too late to do something for himself yet, though, of course, he could never expect to have an opportunity given him of making up all he had lost.

"Perhaps you will not be so low as you anticipate, after all," said he, in a kindly voice, "and even if you are, all the men who knew you must have been perfectly well aware that it was only some accidental

misfortune that prevented you from distinguishing yourself, so we must try to get you some pupils, and after a year or two, if you are well supported, people will forget to ask after your degree, and your time will be fully occupied. I will do all that lies in my power to persuade my friends to read with you, and I should think it likely enough that you will do pretty well."

Fortescue brightened up a little at this friendly address, more because it was kindly meant, than because it suggested any very brilliant hopes, and thanking his new ally for his offer of good services, was about to recommence his confessions of past humbug, when the doors of the senate house were thrown open, and the crowd admitted to scrutinize the lists. Before Darcy could force his way in, the vociferous cheering of the St. Agnes men perfectly well acquainted him with the name of the senior wrangler, and before the uproar which greeted the announcement that Robson's name headed the list, had sufficiently subsided to allow the places of the other wranglers to be read out, he had obtained a post within a convenient distance of the self-elected herald of the tripos, who proceeded to roar out the rest of the names in a stentorian voice.

"Burton, St. Barnabas, second," read he, and a lusty hurrah from Phil rung through the hall, followed by the applause of the few members of the small college to which he belonged who happened to be present, though, as a matter of course, unbacked by the tremendous shout of which the larger colleges are capable, when they choose to put forth their strength. But what was wanting in academic cheering, owing to paucity of numbers, was nobly made up by Hans, who had accompanied his master to the senate house, and *hearing the well-known voice, followed suit, with all*

the vigour of a most powerful chest, and the utmost good will towards Charles, whom, indeed, he considered the acmé of human erudition.

Name after name followed, until the list of wranglers was exhausted, but no Fortescue was yet announced. The senior optimes shared the same fate, and the unfortunate young man began to entertain even greater fears than before, and to tremble for his danger of being plucked outright, when, greatly to his relief, he found himself in the middle of the junior optimes, a not very high-sounding position, certainly, but possessing the recommendation of safety. He was almost immediately, upon the completion of the list, surrounded by a group of fellow-collegians, condoling with him on his bad place, and dropping many very disagreeable hints as to his treatment at his supper party by "the little college men," most of which Darcy overheard, but passed over with a smile as beneath his notice. He was pleased to find, from the expression of Charlie's face when he made his report, that he was perfectly contented with his position, and never expected to be higher, and the morning went off as cheerfully as the anxious state of his own mind permitted; nor did anything occur during the whole of the afternoon, spent principally in making calls in the town, which demands further record on our part.

The ceremony of conferring degrees, though an interesting affair enough to witness, is a peculiarly stupid one to describe, so I will pass over this also together with the dinner-party in the evening, which serves as a farewell meeting to so many of the students, and hasten on my tale to the Sunday evening immediately following, when a letter arrived for Darcy, which produced a marvellous change in that youth's plans and prospects. He was sitting in

his own rooms after hall dinner, holding a rather dismal conversation with his friend about an intended trip into Italy for the purpose of whiling away the time until his affairs could either be brought to trial, or arranged in some satisfactory manner by Mr. Owen, of which there seemed but little hope; when the porter appeared with two letters for him, both bearing the Midhampton postmark, and both in ladies' hands, one perfectly familiar to him, the other unknown, as far as having ever seen it before, but instantly recognised by a kind of presentiment as belonging to Florence Montgomery. We will not imitate his example in greedily fastening upon the latter epistle, tearing it open with hands tremulous with anxiety, and devouring its contents in maddened haste, but give the preference to our old friend Leila, whose letter contained a rather more lucid explanation of the feelings under which the companion missive was penned, than the fair writer would have at all approved; but as the little traitress was acting for the best to the utmost extent of her knowledge, and as nothing but good came out of her breach of confidence, we will not be too hard upon the treachery which led eventually to happy results. But her letter is too characteristic of the writer not be given entire. It ran as follows:—

“DEAR PHIL—Your savage letter to Mr. Montgomery, which was received this morning, has produced amongst all our party much the same effect as the arrival of an owl to board and lodge with my almond tumblers never fails to create amongst those mild-looking but very quarrelsome pets of Dr. Watts. I have not seen the said epistle, though I was extremely anxious to do so, for it must have been a glorious *effusion* to have excited such a commotion. Papa is *in a tremendous* passion, quite as bad as if the meat

were not properly jointed, and has been letting fall divers expressions, amounting in plain English to his solemn conviction that all young men are arrant fools ; that you in person have very often kept up your character in that respect with great spirit ; and that you have never done so in all your life more successfully than now. Mr. Montgomery considers you a vessel ordained unto misfortune, and himself another vessel especially chosen for disappointment, in fact as a kind of plate out of which to eat the humble pie of failure with the fork of resignation. Florence has been weeping and wringing her hands as if they were the things saturated with tears instead of her handkerchief, and accuses herself of all sorts of misfortune having fallen upon you, although I cannot make out what harm she has done you. At any rate, she is going to make some gigantic sacrifice for your sake, and leap into the great coal-pit at Eversley, or something of the kind, and if by so doing she produced a repetition of the Roman miracle and closed it for ever, it would be a very patriotic action, for it is always making a smoke and stench, besides which it would perhaps raise the value of papa's property in Northumberland ; not that we could spare her, the dear old pet, if our faces were to be blackened all and every day, instead of merely preventing us from taking our ride when the wind is in the North.

“ However, to return to our grass-nibblers, as Walter Tomnoddy will insist on calling sheep, Florence is in a desperate condition and considers herself your evil genius, and intends being your widow, though how she will manage that without being your wife first I don't exactly understand ; nor what is the fun of running away from you when she is most comically in love with you—but she knows best being *a discreet princess* as well as a lovely.

“And now I dare say you wonder where I learnt all this, for you may be quite sure that she was not my informant; but stay! I am wrong, for she was, but without meaning to be so, but you are now reaping the benefit of your industrious zeal in teaching me Italian, in which language I was perfected by somebody else—who, is no concern of yours—for it was from a conversation carried on in that assassinating language that I gained my knowledge, neither Florence nor her father taking any more notice of my being in the room, than if, like the gods of the Heathen, ears had I and heard not. The vanity of some people is incredible; Mr. Montgomery never dreamt of my talking far better Italian than himself, and you wanted to break in a horse for me! but never mind, I pity both of you too much to be angry with such truly contemptible impertinence.

“Of this, however, you may be quite sure: first of all, that Florence perfectly returns all your lackadaisical devotion towards her august person; secondly, that neither she nor her father believe a syllable of all that stupid story that is circulated against you, and consequently have no idea whatsoever of your feelings towards her being unworthy of you, or that you are at all bound by anything but prudence to make any alteration in your present plans; thirdly, that they do not wish you to resign your candidateship or go abroad, but on the other hand agree that it is far the best to set the men of Belial at defiance; lastly, that it will all come right somehow or other. And so, having not only forgiven your wish to put me away and marry some one else, like the meek and long-suffering wife I have always been to you, but even cast in my lot with you to obtain you all the information in my power, I think I am entitled to great *honour*, and also to a little broken-nosed Blenheim;

therefore if you do not appear on Monday, with the praises of little Lola upon your lips, and the sweetest black and tan dog in all England under your arm, you are an ungrateful monster. I shan't send you my love any more, so you may wait for Floss's instead ; you have appealed unto Cæsar, and unto Cæsar you may go ! not that you will mind much about that, or Cæsar either—but that is no affair of mine. I did my duty as your wife most faithfully, I am sure, until you ran after strange gods, but I have done with you now, and intend setting up Charles Burton instead, in token of which determination I have given Menie my best paint-box this very morning. May the planetary influences be auspicious to you ! as the astrologers would say, in whom, as you know, I particularly delight.

“ Yours most affectionately,

“ LEILA.

“ P.S.—I don't think I shall divorce you just yet after all, for I believe the husband is compelled to pay his wife's debts, and I owe Augustus Tomnoddy a horse whipping, which you will be good enough to pay him upon my account at your earliest convenience, as it is a debt of honour, not being recoverable in a court of law. Mind you see whether my dog's palate is black, and also whether his paws have long feathers, and whether he has a real tail, and not a lean stick with a tuft of hair at the end. I made a punning riddle on myself this morning, having no one else to laugh at, and here it is : ‘ Why will you resemble my tongue in about a week ? ’ Because you will be an unruly member. Papa says that is very true indeed, which I think extremely rude of him towards you, to speak so disrespectfully of you, and in the highest degree unworthy of him, to interest himself in the election of

a man of whom he entertains so poor an opinion ; but perhaps he was only thinking of me at the time, and fathers have a sort of license to be impertinent ! A dios !”

The other letter—which, re-read with the light of Leila’s communication thrown upon the feelings of the writer, had a very different effect upon Darcy’s mind to that which was produced by the first perusal—was written in the careful, and almost over-precise hand, in which we are liable to convey our sentiments when unnaturally nerved to perform a painful duty, with an appearance of outward firmness and stoicism, which our beating hearts belie ; and evinced in all its composition considerable tokens of having given her who drew it up no little trouble to refrain from showing too manifestly the warmth of the emotions produced by the occasion on which it was penned. And as Darcy once more applied himself to a second reading of its contents, with eyes cleared from the desponding error which had accompanied the first, he could almost picture to himself the painful working of the delicate features of the luckless Florence, as she struggled with indomitable resolution to clothe in calm and conventional language thoughts and sentiments which seemed wellnigh to scorch with agony as they were brought to mind.

“ You will perhaps feel a little surprise at receiving a letter from me,” she wrote, “ but I have too high an opinion of your sense and good feeling, to have any fear that you will be unkind enough or sufficiently vain to mistake my motives in doing so, or blame me for taking an interest in your welfare, and telling you what I think and wish on the subject of your communication with my father.

“ *First let me thank you most sincerely for your*

generous anxiety to spare me pain and insult, for that I am truly grateful, and to express my appreciation of your delicate and gentlemanlike conduct in the matter, and strict sense of honour throughout; but then permit me to decline accepting any sacrifice upon your part for such a cause, and to assure you that I care far too little for such paltry scandal to bend one inch to its threatenings. I have lived at the Manor House, Mr. Darcy, upwards of fifteen years, with the exception of a year and a half spent in Italy when I was a little child, and am perfectly well known to all my neighbourhood from a very early age; so if I have not character enough already to stand of myself against these petty slanders of men of no repute, it is utterly vain for me to begin to establish such a standing now, especially by any weak concessions on my part. Pardon me if I appear to boast, but I trust that it will require rather more than a silly election-squib, to couple the name of Florence Montgomery with shame of any kind; and even if I do suffer somewhat in the public estimation for a little time it is no such great matter. I have a clear conscience upon the subject of the accusation, I have many loving friends upon whose sympathy to fall back, and many duties, and many pleasant pursuits in which to forget, or to learn to smile at these empty babblings. Fear not for me—I have no fear for myself; and deeply shall I grieve, if any mistaken consideration towards me should cut you off from the brilliant prospects of public life, which are now opening, as I would fain hope, to your laudable ambition to serve your country. In fact, I think—and this is papa's opinion also—that it would be extremely impolitic to give up the contest now, and afford our enemies an opportunity of boasting that they had frightened you into a surrender. *It would injure yourself, and it would be worse than*

useless to us, for it would be taken as a tacit confession that the shaft of malice had struck home. So by all means allow your nomination to proceed, and put down this silly attempt to intimidate with a strong hand.

“And now permit me to make some little comment upon that part of your letter to papa, which speaks of self-reproach for the manner in which you addressed me in the conservatory on the night in which you confided to me the story of your trouble, and for the feelings which you even now profess to entertain towards me. I can here entirely exculpate you from all blame, since you were not aware of the position in which you stood when you first persuaded yourself that you were beginning to form a more than usually favourable opinion of me, and as for a few rash words, uttered under most trying circumstances, I am too well aware that from the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh, to pass a severe judgment there. Nay, more, I will sincerely thank you for the honest and manly friendship into which you converted any incipient fancy of the kind, immediately upon discovering the real state of the case, and I assure you that I appreciate that regard most highly, and would not lose it for the world. And why should we break up all our pleasant interchange of thoughts and interests, and become perfect strangers to each other, merely because some foolish or malicious persons might say we were in love? As to disgrace, I must express a very decided opinion on that subject, that in so flagrant a case of deception as your marriage, even if its validity be supported in point of bare law, there would be no dishonour at all to any man in feeling too deeply how he had been tricked and overreached, to pretend to entertain an affection for the person who had so shamefully used him, or to deny *that he should consider the dissolution of the tie a*

relief. And we both (I will honestly include myself) have great cause to be very thankful that this conspiracy—for I can call it nothing better—came to our knowledge before it became more painful to us to look on each other only as friends than it is now; for I suppose that mutual good opinion and congeniality of ideas will mostly produce love at last, if no check be given to the growth of the feeling, and then how incomparably worse our condition would have been, and how far bitterer the task of obeying the strict laws of duty! yet that this might possibly have been the case, it is useless for us to deny.

“If you think it would render matters more agreeable to you next week for me to be absent during the time of the election, I can easily make a few visits amongst my friends in the South, and return home when the excitement is over, to congratulate you upon your success, and to undertake my duties of monitress, which, I assure you, I do not intend to give up. I dare say that you think me a strange girl to write in such a strain, but I really was far too much flattered by your selection of me as your councillor and friend, to feel by any means willing to surrender my office. And now, farewell! may prosperity soon return to you, and remove the cloud of sorrow which at present hangs over you! but if it be the will of heaven that it should continue, let your poor little monitress venture to exhort you steadfastly to remember that there is no sting like that of self-reproach, no comfort like a sense of duty, and that nothing in either public or private life is worth purchasing by the sacrifice of one grain of honest self-respect. I have written to you in full confidence in your honour and discretion, and in a very unreserved manner; I pray you read my letter in *the spirit* in which it has been composed, and rest

assured of my hearty good-will towards you, and my earnest desire for your welfare.

“Yours most sincerely,
“FLORENCE MONTGOMERY.”

This letter, which had at first appeared to poor Phil so coldly and almost heartlessly indifferent to his devoted affection, and so hopelessly indicative of simple friendship on the part of its writer, had, since the perusal of Leila's commentary, assumed such a different aspect, and the maidenly shrinking from a confession even to herself of her real feelings was so thoroughly comprehended by him, that he suddenly leapt from the lowest depth of despair to the highest state of exultation, and spurning all dismal thoughts of failure from his mind, arrived by a short cut at the conclusion that all must go on flourishingly in future, and that even the delay, which was the principal evil he now dreaded, would be, comparatively speaking, innocuous, since it was to be cheered by the presence of his adored lady-love and her sunny smiles.

He therefore wrote off in haste to Mr. Montgomery to announce his intention of standing his election, enclosing a little note for Florence upon the subject of her proposed absence, in which he hypocritically assured her that there was not the least necessity for her withdrawal, and echoed all her expressions of platonic friendship. He then despatched a message to the magnanimous Jem, or his deputy, to supply a beautiful Blenheim with unexceptional feathers and a coal black palate by nine o'clock the next morning, and spent the rest of the evening in that reckless joyousness, which, in a mind like his, so easily succeeds to great depression, and which in the present *relief from the weight of sorrow can overlook so much that is threatening in the future.*

CHAPTER XX.

HEART SPEAKS TO HEART.

It was growing dusk on the following day, and Florence, having spent the afternoon in making little charitable visits amongst her poorer neighbours, leaving behind her wherever she went the good-will and gratitude of all who knew her, was now slowly wending her way towards home, with her eyes fixed upon the ground, and deeply immersed in thought solemn and melancholy rather than positively unhappy, when the sound of horse's feet behind her caused her to turn quickly round, and Leila Mainwaring reined in her horse to speak to her friend, with a face as merry as ever, and a wicked smile curling the corners of her mouth, as if she had some little secret of her own to disclose, which she flattered herself would not prove altogether unacceptable.

The sight of that childish, careless joyousness rather grated upon poor Florence, who was little disposed to enter into it, and whose late occupation of resolutely devoting herself to useful and practical duties, as the best remedy for her sadness of heart, was totally at variance with the giddy fancies of the clever but wayward Leila; and she felt almost inclined to check her exuberant mirth by some excuse of indisposition and haste to be at home. But she was not one who desired every ebullition of merriment to be hushed entirely to suit her own mood, nor was she extreme to comment on the apparent want of sympathy evinced by this exhibition of high spirits on the part

of a girl who knew how unhappy she was; so whispering to herself—"Poor child, she is too young to have felt the sorrows of life! Why should she not be merry and light-hearted now? her cares will begin quite soon enough!" she cleared from her own face the cloud that overcast it, and tried to make her greeting as cheerful as that which was given to her.

"I was coming to see you, Floss," said Leila, springing from her horse, and throwing the bridle to the groom, who had at last overtaken his hard-riding mistress after a weary gallop of nearly three miles, in which his weight, and the inferior mettle of the road-hackney on which he was mounted, had forced him to strain every nerve to keep even in sight of her. "I think you will be glad to hear the news I bring, though of course you will declare that nothing could be a matter of more profound indifference to you."

"What news?" asked Florence, with a most heroic affectation of calmness, although her heart fluttered like a bird struggling in the hand of the fowler.

Leila's reply was couched in song, a habit she had acquired, amongst a multitude of others, from a diligent imitation of her favourite Phil—

"What's all the steer, kimmer, what's all the steer?
Jamie's coming home, kimmer, soon he will be here."

Florence started, for the application of the rhymes appeared scarcely doubtful as alluding to her lover.

"You speak in riddles, my child," said she, laughing; "pray expound them, for the benefit of my dull comprehension."

"Not I, indeed," responded Leila, "but on the exact contrary, I shall set you another: 'There's a fish for dinner, don't you eat none on him,' as Bailey, jun. remarked, which being interpreted, means, *You will have a visitor to-night, don't be at home.*"

And once more vaulting into her saddle before the groom could dismount to assist her, the messenger of good tidings was scampering home over the moor as fast as her fleet thoroughbred could carry her, waving her hand to Florence, and singing to herself, *à la Phil*, with the utmost complacency, as though extremely proud of what she had done.

Florence pursued her homeward walk at a much brisker pace than before Leila had overtaken her, and with feelings if not happier, at least more excited, half longing for, half dreading the coming interview, and growing every moment more and more conscious of how feeble were her good resolutions to look upon Darcy as a friend she was glad to see, and pleased to talk with, but nothing more. Indeed, she now began to fear that he was going to act upon the principles expressed in her letter rather too much, and that he was not as unwilling to substitute the colder feeling of friendship for his former declarations of affection, as she was selfish enough to wish.

"I think he might have felt more at the prospect of meeting me again," muttered she, "and not have written to Leila in excellent spirits, as I suppose he has, to announce his change of purpose about his election. Well, well, perhaps it is for the best, after all, for if he can so easily look on me as a mere friend, pride and self-respect will soon teach me to do the same. Yes, it is decidedly much the best, as it has turned out."

But it was rather dolefully said, though the words themselves were so brave, and the poor maiden, like many more experienced persons, who make pretensions to far higher philosophy than hers, was not very delighted at the idea of seeing her own advice put into practice; and though she would have laid down her *life for him* without a moment's hesitation, yet she

certainly was rather disappointed at the idea that the whole happiness of his existence was not as hopelessly blighted as she had expected. And then, how would he receive her ? this question, however, was not long unsolved, for on reaching home, and strolling into the library, she there encountered the very person of whom she was thinking ; and if his face was not the most deceitful index ever appended to man's body, the delight of Philip Darcy at seeing her was abundantly as great as even she could desire.

" I have made my appearance rather unexpectedly, I fear, Miss Montgomery," said he, " but having determined to continue the contest for your good borough after all, and remembering that my letter to your father, announcing my change of purpose, would not reach him until to-morrow, or at the very best late to-night, I have taken the liberty of coming in person to tell him my intention, before even proceeding to the Priory, where I purpose taking up my abode during the election. Mr. Montgomery has been kind enough to invite me to stay to dinner, and consult over our plans, for which indeed it would appear that there is no great superfluity of time, since I find that the nomination is fixed for to-morrow. So, if you will excuse my riding dress, I intend to accept his invitation, and will send the trusty Hans to the Priory, to announce my forthcoming arrival at night. And now let me thank you a thousand times, dear lady, for your kind letter, which has restored me to life and interest in the future, and has cheered me with the fond hope that I am not unpitied by you in my sorrow, and that I have not lost in your eyes by the calumnious reports so industriously disseminated against me by my political opponents."

" Oh, no," replied Florence, eagerly ; " I should *indeed have been* unjust if I had taken part against

you in a matter where you gave me your whole confidence, and in which I am so fully assured of your innocence; to say nothing of the very evident fact, that all this would have been spared you, had it not been for your ready compliance with my father's desire that you should contest the borough against the Trimmington interest. And I am exceedingly glad that you have changed your mind, and intend being a candidate, despite this scandal, for if you had not, I should always have blamed myself for having stood in your way. But since you are disposed to treat this contemptible gossip as carelessly as it deserves, I trust we shall have no farther interruption to your intended settlement in our neighbourhood, and that all the plans over which you and I laughed so merrily on the night of Leila's ball, may yet be carried into execution."

"That must depend upon my detestable law-suit," answered Darcy, gravely; "if I can once dispose of that, as I hope to do, I intend to act as you say, and to become one of Midhampton society, and as stay-at-home a squire as need be desired; if not," and he sighed heavily, "I would rather never again see the place where such bright hopes were blasted, and every tree of which would remind me, like Arasmanes the Seeker, of the one faint glimpse of an Eden, whose gates I was destined never to enter."

"That is not kindly said," murmured Florence, casting down her eyes, "it would not be treating us at all like the friends you pretend to esteem us, to be in such haste to leave us for ever. Why should you visit upon us the consequences of a misfortune which has happened by no fault of ours, and upon which you have never heard a reproachful word from our lips. And yet you threaten to shake off our dust from your feet, as if we had wronged you."

"*Oh, do not sport with my feelings thus, Florence!*"

exclaimed poor Phil, passionately ; “ you know that my reasons for such conduct would proceed from anything but indifference or anger. How could I bear to see you every day, or to be in the habit of meeting you wherever I went, and yet know that I must not allow my tongue to utter its tenderest thoughts? Can you expect or wish me to make such a trial? I make no concealment of my devotion to you, nor can you possibly doubt it; and yet you blame me for wishing to spare myself the pain of seeing you with an impassable gulf between us, or perhaps even united to another.”

“ And do I not allot to myself the same destiny as to you, Philip Darcy?” said Florence, softly. “ And do you imagine that it is without pain that I hear your noble love under such trying circumstances? Am I putting no constraint upon my own heart? I ask your friendship, and I offer you mine, because we may mutually grant that without shame; as for the rest, your own sense of honour teaches you that it must remain a prohibited subject as yet. But with regard to my listening to the suit of another, that will never be now; and if it be the good pleasure of heaven that you should be called upon to lead the rest of your life uncheered by the sweet interests of home, bound as the living to the dead, to a legal fiction rather than a wife, be well assured of this, that your desolation shall at least be lightened by the knowledge that the maiden whom you would fain have made your own remains faithful through life to your honour and your love, and she will go down to her grave, submissive indeed to her doom, but none the less steadily refusing to fill up with a new affection the void created by the deprivation of the indulgence of the old. And if we can thus live, honourably and firmly faithful to our *sincere* friendship, strengthening each other, bearing

each others burthens, provoking each other to good and useful actions, is it not far better than giving way to the idle romance, which ungratefully and rebelliously shuts its eyes to all the opportunities of good and numberless innocent enjoyments, which this fair world of ours so bounteously affords."

And the delicate little hand was laid confidingly, and almost compassionately upon Darcy's head, which was bowed upon his folded hands on the mantelpiece, against which he leant while she addressed him.

"Right, dearest lady," returned Darcy, rousing himself from his despondency, and pressing the kind hand to his grateful lips. "Your advice is truly worthy of you. Continue still to be my best and purest of councillors, my polestar of honour; and whether it lead to happiness and prosperity, or to a life of probation and disappointment, I will receive my destiny with cheerful resignation."

The return of Mr. Montgomery from the duties of the toilette here put an end to the conversation, and the rest of the evening was almost exclusively spent in discussing the order of proceedings at the morrow's nomination; but when Philip returned to the Priory, it was clear enough to the eyes of the watchful and affectionate Leila, that her letter had been productive of all the consolation which it had been intended to convey, and she put her new present, the Blenheim, into the cot she had been preparing for his reception during the last two days, with a self-contented conviction that she had fairly earned it by her exertions in guiding the two lovers from their mutual cross purposes to a truer comprehension of their real feelings.

"I wonder whether anybody will ever love me as much," mused little Lola, as she stood before the fire in her dressing-room, with one pretty foot upon the fender, and a long tail of glossy black hair in each

hand. "It must be a very strange kind of feeling I should think." And this sage reflection appeared to remind her of John Sobieski's stirrup, for she went to a bureau in which she kept a choice collection of her most favourite relics, and taking out the said curiosity, sate with it in her lap for more than an hour, staring into the fire as busily as if it contained a magic mirror of coming events. And strange to say, her meditations, connected as they seemed to be with certain musical reminiscences, found their vent in the very song which she had stigmatised as being so hideous, when alluding to Phil's habit of singing it; and to the everlasting disgrace of her character for consistency I am compelled to confess, that the few words which slipped out from time to time were couched in the Magyar she had lately compared to the braying of a donkey, and the tune so pertinaciously hummed was no other than her horror of all horrors, "The March from the Bronze Horse," better known perhaps to *ci-devant* Cantabs by the name of "Good St. Anthony," though I have no idea that our fair friend had ever heard of that extraordinary specimen of ecclesiastical biography.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE BRITISH OAK PROVES SOUND AT THE CORE.

ABOUT seven o'clock in the evening of the day on which the ferocious attack upon Darcy, described a few pages back, had taken place, the long, low room at the Spotted Donkey, which formed the rendezvous of the committee of the "Yellow and no Mistake" party, was filled to suffocation by an expectant crowd, anxious to drink in the words of political wisdom from the lips of Stephen Trueman, a well-known moor orator from a northern seaport town, whose fame as a speaker had reached even to Midhampton, and whose coming was looked for with the greatest anxiety by all present. His appearance had been announced in enormous sulphur-coloured placards, as about to be made at seven o'clock precisely, and dozens of the company assembled had been in the room for nearly two hours, to make sure of a good place, when their great gun was to open his fire "upon the bloated and effeminate aristocracy." Nor had they long to wait beyond the time appointed, for hardly had the great white-faced clock concluded the exertion of giving vent to seven very apoplectic or plethoric coughs, accompanied by an internal wheezing and labouring for breath most painful to witness, than a little door at the farther end of the room opened, and accompanied by two friends, the expected orator made his appearance, and took his stand at the head of the table, which served as a kind of bar to prevent the audience from throng-

ing too eagerly around the speaker. He was received with three deafening cheers, but his aspect, nevertheless, was singularly unlike that of a man who was pleased with his company, for it was with a very angry and disturbed expression of countenance that he motioned for silence, and mounting the table proceeded to address them.

Stephen Trueman was a short, fresh-coloured, but rather weather-beaten man, of about five-and-thirty, dressed with scrupulous neatness and cleanliness, but without a particle of finery, and his whole appearance was that of the orderly, thrifty, respectable sailor of the best class, to which indeed he belonged in every particular. His features, though neither regular nor handsome, were redeemed from homeliness by an appearance of intelligence and manly good humour, that prepossessed a stranger in his favour, and his manner and bearing were by no means in keeping with his present equivocal position as a mob lecturer, but were considerably more those of a firm admirer of rigid discipline. He gazed sternly and almost fiercely upon the faces around him, with his arms crossed upon his breast, his usual attitude when speaking, and after a short pause began as follows, in a clear voice, which was audible over the whole room:—

“I have received an invitation from you, my men, to come down to your borough, and lend my assistance in encouraging the good cause of restoring to the people their just share in making those laws which they have to obey, and controlling the expenditure of the taxes, which they are the principal persons to pay. That invitation I accepted, and here I am, having given up a very good coasting trip to keep my word with you; but if I had known that I was to witness such a scene as I have this day beheld, it is far enough from your town that I should have been now.

“ You talk in all your meetings of the oppression and the violence of the rich, and of their cruel intimidation of the poorer voters. Now, what do you say of your brutal, unmanly attack upon Mr. Darcy this afternoon ; and your attempt to terrify an inoffensive young man from daring to appeal to that fair and open expression of the sentiments of the town, about which you make such a canting, hypocritical fuss in your speeches?—Tell me this, my fine fellows—are you such fools as to believe that the men who have got the power in their hands at present, will ever consent to give up one bit of it to you, as long as you show by your disgraceful conduct how unfit you are to use it? you must be uncommonly blind if you think that they will. Do you suppose, then, that the best way to establish your rights as men of the same feelings, honesty, and intelligence as the aristocracy, is to prove yourselves to be little better—no! a great deal worse—than the brute-beasts in the woods? I am as much a man of the people as any of you, and heartily do I long for the day when the Parliament will represent the wishes of the whole of us, and not of a few lords with great estates, or money-lending land sharks with borough interest ; but I tell you, that sooner than see to-day’s black business renewed very often, I would willingly hire myself out as a regular retainer of some great man, like they used to have in olden days, and spend my life in keeping down such a set of ruffians with swords and muskets.

“ Ah ! you may well groan,” continued he, as a tempest of disapprobation raged through the room, “ but you had better groan because you are ashamed of yourselves, than because you are angry with me. I tell you, that the course you are pursuing is the very way to ruin your cause, and to unite all respectable men against you, as they would club together against

wolves; and if you have not something better to say for yourselves, I wash my hands of all connexion with you, and shall follow a very different tack, in which I hope all the friends of real advancement among the people will soon follow me, as the only hope of getting our rights."

And amidst a volley of hisses, he leaped down from the table.

The next speaker was a little, ferret-faced artizan, who was employed in a felt manufactory, and the very incarnation of all the low cowardly ferocity of which Stephen had just spoken. His whole address was of the usual kind, universal amongst spouters of his class and sentiments, and contained nothing worthy of record, until at the conclusion he taxed Stephen Trueman with having been bribed by the Blues, and being no better than a mere hired spy and traitor in the Yellow camp. This brought the sailor with one bound upon the table again, and despite of the uproar he continued to speak, until one hint that he dropped converted the hubbub into comparative silence, the audience being completely convinced that it would be their best policy to hear what he had to say, however unpalatable it might be to their minds, since it was abundantly evident that he was too well acquainted with their secret intrigues to be offended with impunity.

"I am no spy on anyone, my lads!" said he, "and even if I see anything of which I don't quite approve, it is not my way to go and blab directly. Otherwise, you would have been in a pretty mess! for I know who set on the fellows who attacked young Darcy, and I see five or six of the principal rioters in this very room; and I know all about Bob Farren's little back parlour! and that's something like spies and traitors, to be taking money and beer from one side to sell *them to the other*. So let's have no more of this

jabber, little foxy-poll! or you and I will quarrel, and you won't much admire that. And now, my lads," continued he, "are you bent upon carrying on your game in this blackguard, ruffianly style? or do you intend to bring forward your candidate in a fair, manly, straightforward way? I want to know all about that before I go any further with you. So here goes to put it to the vote. Those who are heartily ashamed of to-day's work hold up your hands!"

Five or six of those present held up their hands, but the rest maintained a sullen silence, and neither cheering or hissing him, passively refused to back the resolution he had put.

"Very well," said Stephen, sturdily, "if you will insist on sticking to your dirty tricks, I cannot help it, so good-bye for the present! but you have not seen the last of me yet, I promise you! Now I will give you a little piece of advice, and woe betide you if you neglect to take it. If on the day of the nomination you hear a band playing a tune like this," (and he began to hum a few bars of the well-known "Keel-row" of the Northern seaports) "and see a hundred and fifty or so Sunderland mariners walking up your High Street, three abreast, look out for squalls! and keep the Queen's peace as prettily as if it were packed up in jeweller's wool; but if you don't, Heaven help you! for as sure as I am a man, there won't be a bit of all your heads left uncracked big enough to make the lid of a baccy-box."

So saying, he was about to leave the room, when he was stopped at the door by a hulking fellow from a neighbouring town, who was a third-rate boxer and confirmed ruffian, who, laying his hand on his shoulder, remarked with a brutal grin, "And you have not seen the last of us just yet, my little bantam! I have a word or two to say to you before you go."

"Well, my boy," said the undaunted sailor, "are an uncommon big chap to be getting so p with a man so much lighter than yourself, and I you are a regular bruiser by the cut of your ji what must be must; and I am not going to sh white feather, so, although I suppose I sh knocked to pieces in a few minutes, I am your m

So whistling to himself with great composure proceeded to divest himself of his coat and shi gallant little tar commenced his preparations f unequal combat with his gigantic antagonist. before he was half ready to go into the next room, some officious amateurs were clearing with great z the intended fight, the surrounding crowd were p aside by a powerful man in a rough pea-jack flannel trousers, who had hitherto remained un in a corner of the apartment, and who thus add the bigger champion:—

"You great, loutish coward! what, are you g fight with that little fellow? and you call yourself a ber of the fancy! Take that, as a little keepsak Harry Presscott, and as a slight refresher to remi not to be getting us a bad name as bullies and ru and catching the offender a most terrific blow face, which sent him spinning into the arms of t standers, the redoubtable prize-fighter lugged S out of the door, and bade him make a bolt for to take care how he came there again; while he disappeared down a dark lane, and took his Bob Farren's hostelry, the Horse and Jockey, g ling, as he walked along, "It's a devilish go that I followed Mr. Darcy here, after all, for be a blazes of a row before the week is out, certain, and a man like me to help to keep ore be worth his money."

CHAPTER XXII.

"UNDER WHICH KING, BEZONIAN?"

THE day appointed for the nomination opened with a stinging frost and most piercing east wind, but with a sky as blue and cloudless as the heart of painter could desire, and the sun shone cheerily, despite of the intense cold, over the groups of country people flocking towards the town, almost as soon as it was light, as though they expected a great crush in the Market-place, and were fearful of not obtaining a good view of the proceedings; for it was universally understood that the present contest was likely to prove the severest trial of strength between the rival parties that had been known for many years, and that the defeat of Augustus Tomnoddy would be almost equivalent to the utter destruction of Lord Trimmington's rule over the borough of Midhampton. Once or twice, indeed, the Blues had been able to return the second member by dint of great exertions, when one of the Earl's nominees happened to be a person of no individual influence in the borough, but a successful opposition to one of the family, or any pretensions to the first seat, had never entered their minds before. Now, however, the battle was to be fought under different circumstances, and the full force of the Yellow army was to be attacked in position. There would be no split votes, one to conciliate my lord and another for conscience' sake, on the part of a secret friend to the Blues, who dare not risk the loss of Castle custom; no plumpers for Tomnoddy, to sustain a character for Yellow zeal

without offending the Blues too bitterly ; in fact, no possibility of disconnecting the support of the Trimmington candidate from the general view of political bias ; every vote for Darcy must be dead against Mr. Tomnoddy, and *vice versâ*, so that the whole body of electors were so called upon to hang out their true colours, and to show in a decisive manner to which party they belonged ; all of which tended to make the impending struggle one of unusual interest and excitement.

The bulk of the travellers to the scene of action were honest, decent-looking rustics, in whose red round faces and clean holiday attire there was nothing indicative of any desire to riot ; but every now and then, slouching along in twos and threes, their tawdry finery of glass brooches and smart neckhandkerchiefs, dismally contrasting with the squalid dirt of their ragged linen, came little knots of mechanics, whose scowling brows, and loud angry voices, told a very different tale with regard to their disposition to act quietly, and boded no good to the peace of the town ; and as the morning drew on, and the time for commencing the business of the day approached, the knots of these ruffians grew more numerous and larger, until many of the more timid of the crowd began to think it advisable to return home before any riot arose, and the impression became general that a terrific outburst was at hand.

Already had the Blue *cortège* appeared in sight, winding its way down the hill from the Priory, where a public breakfast had been given by the Colonel to the supporters of his political *protegée*, and the angry mob was crowding every avenue to the Market-place, when on the northern side of the moor another procession was seen to advance, preceded by a brass band, and carrying banners which appeared to belong to some

other body than one which could be recognized by its colours, for some of the flags were blue, some green, and others red and white, but prominent amongst all was the glorious old Union Jack, and the air which the band was playing was the very one which had been pointed out a week ago by Stephen Trueman, as the signal of his threatened return, being no other than the Keel-row; and this ominous conjunction struck a marvellous dismay into the hearts of the intended rioters. Nearer and nearer, with a solid tramp like some mighty hammer beating the frost-bound soil, came this compact body of men, marching three abreast in perfect silence, and evincing no symptoms of partizanship towards either side, as they passed the various groups of Blue or Yellow politicians upon the road. Through the dense mass which filled the streets they swept like some resistless torrent, the crowd making way for them to pass; each centre man linked arm in arm with his companions on either side, and all carrying stout cudgels round their necks by a broad ribbon. Hardly noticing the mob through which they passed, they forced their way up to the hustings, round which they soon cleared a little space, and clustering round their self-chosen post stood the hundred and fifty north-country mariners, whose assistance in the cause of order Stephen had not promised in vain, when he so emphatically denounced the previous brutality of the Yellow myrmidons.

They made room cheerfully, and even courteously, for Mr. Tomnoddy and his supporters to enter the hustings, but no cheer or mark of approbation came from their lips, as they again closed up, and shut out the mob. But when the Colonel's carriage drove up, and Darcy, still lame from his savage misuse, was helped up the steps by Mr. Montgomery and Captain Devereux, a long, hearty shout, such as greets a

British Captain when he issues his orders to charge in an engagement, rang from all those hundred and fifty throats, as a practical protest on the part of the rough, but manly sailors, against the cowardly flight of his assailants; while a tempest of applause more vociferous, though mingled with peals of a merrily laughing laughter, welcomed the warlike Leila, as drew her father and Darcy at the hustings, she drove the Crown and Mitre, on the evergreen decorated balcony of which the ladies of the Blue party were assembled in full force.

Darcy bowed in return to this manifestation of goodwill on the part of his new allies, and waved his hat; and as soon as the unanimous cheer with which his acknowledgment of their salute was received subsided into something like a calm, the proceedings were opened by the mayor, and the nomenclature began.

The Honourable Augustus Tomnoddy was first introduced to the electors, as a fitting person to represent the ancient and independent borough of Midham, by Mr. McKenzie, who contrived to make it as though it were a monstrous thing for the ministers of religion to take part in such worldly matters. He contended that contested elections, except under such extraordinary circumstances as the present; when, on the contrary, it became a duty, only the more laudable for its exceptional nature, for pious and godly men to take part through their customary neutrality, and to fight for the cause of morality and high principle as uniformly as the lay portion of the community. He made a learned allusion that nobody amongst the crowd exactly comprehended, to the conduct of the high priest and the priests of Judah, in slaying the murderous and usurping Athaliah; but as the *connexion* this had in the minds of his hearers

the matter in hand, was to recommend them forthwith to despatch Darcy with stones, and this deed of righteous indignation ran no little risk of being rewarded by the gallows, instead of a crown of honour, to say nothing of the wholesome terror they entertained of those abominable sailors, his eloquence produced no other effect than a vague applause, indicating some indistinct idea on the part of the mob that Parson McKenzie had made a grand remark, and said a very fine thing, if they could but find out the real meaning of it.

His next somewhat irreverent medley of sacred and profane subjects was received with infinitely greater enthusiasm, because it was a considerably stronger hint, and was easier of comprehension, besides involving no danger of bringing those who listened to the voice of the charmer within the iron-tipped clutches of the criminal law; and an allusion to the happy condition of the early church, whose poorer members found their temporal wants abundantly supplied by their richer brethren, in admiration of their piety and superior claims to charity over the unregenerate heathen, coupled as it of course was with a comparison between these valiant soldiers of the good cause and the present crusaders against that personification of all iniquity, Mr. Darcy, brought down a whirlwind of approbation that warmed the cockles of the good parson's heart, as he thought of the fat living he might himself be earning by this day's exertion; and as he concluded his task with an oily smile and a well-satisfied rubbing together of his coarse thick hands, in the words below recorded, his soul was great within him, filled with the proud consciousness that not even Augustus could cringe, and lie, and boast, and cant with greater vigour than he himself had now evinced; and to be unsurpassed by such a master-spirit as his was an honour indeed.

"In thus recommending my dear friend and pupil,"

said that affectionate ex-tutor, "I fear that I am rather laying myself open to the imputation of being egotistical, for he has imbibed so many of my own principles and views during the period in which I was honoured with the task of forming his young mind, that it almost seems like proposing a younger self. But added to any zeal for religion which I may both have shown in person and instilled into the docile and well-disposed heart of him who was confided to my training, of which my good lord has shown an appreciation far above my humble merits, this noble young gentleman has talents of the highest order, an undeviating friendship for good and sound men, and a grateful heart for every act of good will, which qualities render him of all men the fittest to become the representative of such a constituency as that of Mid-hampton."

The seconder of the liberal-minded scion of aristocracy was the Mr. Sawdry, once before mentioned in our history as being by profession a trustee; and as the speech of his predecessor had been redolent of the rewards awaiting the faithful servants of the great earl, so was his own as full of indistinct threatenings of vengeance and destruction upon all lukewarm or hostile electors. Dismal hints did he let fall of moneys lent, and bonds locked up in drawers, and leases expiring during the ensuing quarter, the fatal effects of which depended wholly upon the election; and although it is only bare justice to his discretion to add that he attributed all these fearful preparations for slaughter to Darcy's supporters, and not to his own tolerant friends, yet it is hardly to be wondered at, if certain persons remembered with great uneasiness with what facility and delicacy of culinary art their ganders might be cooked with the savoury sauce prepared by the Blue Committee for the geese of their recreant voters. So his address was *upon the whole* a very effective one too; and as he

retired from the front of the hustings, he ventured to entertain an inward hope "that he had done a good turn for the folks at the Castle, which deserved a substantial remembrance, and that he had not been entirely eclipsed by that greedy brute of a parson, to whom the daughters of the horse-leech were as nothing in point of insatiability."

He was very little cheered to be sure by his own party, and most lustily hooted by the enemy; but a gentleman who was accustomed to "advance any sum of money which may be required, to heirs of real estate, officers in the army and navy, beneficed clergymen, &c., &c., upon their personal security," was not likely to be very thin-skinned as to the love which was borne him by those with whom he dealt, so that, upon the whole, he was well contented with his performance.

It was now the turn of the Blues to bring forward their candidate, and much to the dismay of Augustus, who had hoped by means of the indirect intimidation alluded to in his letter to Mr. Partridge, to have prevented at the very least, any active part in the election being taken by Mr. Montgomery, even if he were not able entirely to avert his hostile vote and interest, that gentleman advanced with a most good-tempered and imperturbable countenance to the front of the platform, and proposed as their member his excellent young friend Mr. Darcy, of whom he had lately seen a good deal during his flying visits to Midhampton, and in whose affairs he took the deepest interest, believing him, as he did, to be a most talented and honourable young man.

"You have heard, I believe," said he, smiling, "from several of my friends on the right of Mr. Mayor, that I am currently supposed to have a rather personal motive for my intimate acquaintance with

him, and if any one here present, who has known me for fifteen years and more, chooses to believe me guilty of any dishonourable conduct, his opinions are his own, and he is at liberty to entertain them. As I think myself that abusive scandal, like a stone thrown in the air, is very liable to fall back upon the head of the sender, I shall not imitate the objectionable example set me by the proposer of Mr. Tomnoddy, of making a contest of political principles a subject of personal virulence, and shall deal with the matter before us wholly and solely as a public question. But at the same time, since the private affairs of Mr. Darcy have been most unjustifiably raked up by his opponents in this struggle, I beg to say that I am perfectly well acquainted with the real circumstances of the story to which allusion has been made, and that I am quite satisfied with the honourable manner in which he behaved throughout ; so, if my guarantee of his innocence of all blame have any weight with some of you here present, receive my assurance that you will be doing him the greatest injustice if you condemn him before fair time has been given to weigh the merits of the case, which is now in the hands of professional men to receive a rigid scrutiny."

The speaker then diverged into more general subjects of politics, in which it is not necessary to follow him, any further than simply to record that he candidly and manfully avowed his distrust of plausible novelties, and expressed his devotion to the old, well-established institutions of his country, under which the nation had flourished so long and so prosperously.

Darcy's nomination was seconded by one of the prebendaries of the cathedral, in a very short, dry, classical speech, amounting to little more than the bare fact, that the Blue candidate would be supported by the Church party in the city, as being an enemy to

all lax innovations and hostile attacks upon the established religion, under cover of zeal for its reform, and that, in his opinion, demagogues, since they had utterly overthrown alike the liberties and national existence of ancient Greece and Rome, were not so hallowed by historical associations, as to render their multiplication in modern times, a deed of either piety, necessity, or charity.

Augustus Tomnoddy expressed a great desire to make Darcy speak first, under the transparent pretence of courtesy, but really to take cues out of his address, to which he might append spiteful, and would-be witty comments of his own. But all his petty cunning was thrown away upon a shrewd, quick-sighted young fellow like Phil, who had known him for two or three years at school, and again by reputation, at the university, and was perfectly well acquainted with all the trickery which he dignified by the name of talent; and all his polite asseverations, that he was positively ashamed of taking the precedence of an unknown candidate, and forestalling the arguments of his adversary, so as to leave an unfavourable impression of his rival's views upon the minds of his audience, before he had even fairly stated them, together with a mass of other clap-trap, which only added to his natural folly the aggravation of an assumption of superior wisdom, met with no better reception than a mock-heroic bow of refusal, and an oracular response, couched, as an oracle should be conveyed, in flowing verse—

“Nay, spite of all your tricks, it
Is not in you, Judge Lynch, to do,
No, nohows can you fix it.”

Augustus looked daggers at his smiling antagonist.

who appeared to have clothed himself in a contemptuous and careless good humour, which served as armour of proof against all the philippics that could be hurled against him, and seeing no hope of altering his determination, or stinging him out of his cool self-possession, he proceeded himself to address the impatient crowd, with a dismal foreboding that he was going to cut the very poorest figure he had ever yet made in public life. For the grave and solid arguments of Solomon himself, had that learned monarch appeared upon the hustings to confute his garbled statistics and unfounded assertions, he would not have cared the value of one of the mock jewels in the shirt-studs of the friend who was now holding his hat for him while he spoke; nor was he in the least afraid of Mr. Montgomery, whose utmost indignation or satire he might safely set at defiance, for in such a contest he had all the advantage over the punctilious old gentleman that a street boy has over a well-dressed man in throwing dirt, viz., that the mud is of no earthly consequence to him, whereas his clean-shirted adversary is terribly discomfited by it; but in provoking Darcy to a battle of words, he felt that he might be bringing upon himself a shower of merciless witticisms and jokes, which coming from so very young a man, would not be taken amiss by his audience, or considered derogatory to his character and station; and he was painfully awake to the effect which a fair specimen of Cambridge "chaffing," even when divested of any indiscreet expressions, might have upon the assembled crowd, in answer to his laboured and pompous jests, or high-flown affectation of classical erudition.

Nothing therefore could have been tamer than his speech, simply announcing that he had taken office *under the new government*, and expressing his hope

that his constituency would evince their confidence in her Majesty's Ministers, by again returning him to Parliament.

"He laid claim to no extraordinary merit, but the very fact of his appointment was a proof that he was held in some esteem by competent authorities; at any rate, he had some experience in public life, while his highly-gifted adversary was as yet untried. He should always be proud to serve his fellow-townsmen, and hoped that in his official capacity he should be able to be of use."

Such, diluted with many gallons of the water of diffuseness, was the tenor of his address, which prodigiously disappointed the bulk of his supporters, who had expected a most flowery and fervent oration, interspersed with gratifying personalities and withering sarcasms upon all who opposed his views, and were naturally incensed at this cruel blight upon all their fond anticipations of a little innocent diversion. So they greeted the end of his speech with a doleful "oh," as much as to say, "Is that all you have to say for yourself?" and waited in no very placable frame of mind for the address of his opponent. But in one respect this milk-and-water effusion answered the purpose of Augustus Tomnoddy indifferently well; for as he had abstained from personal hostilities, so did his antagonist, at least with one exception, which, mixed up as it was with purely political allusions, did no great damage to his vanity, though in itself very far from being complimentary.

"I cannot appeal to my public life," said Darcy, "for I confess that I am perfectly inexperienced in such matters at present, but as we generally consider with both horses and dogs, that an untried one is considerably better than a well-known but worthless brute, perhaps I may not lose so much by my want of

notoriety as it may at first appear, for I think that what we have lately seen of the Ministers is not over-much to their credit. And I must candidly own that I have no earthly chance of obtaining office, even if my party were to come into power, and so can offer you no other loaves than sundry hunting breakfasts and dinners at the Hall, or fishes either, except leave to catch them upon the manor in any way you choose but netting them. For although it would appear that the present government have not twenty better men amongst their adherents than my honourable friend Mr. Tomnoddy, since they are far too immaculately free from all suspicion of truckling to powerful families to have given him office, were there any other person belonging to their party who was better fitted to hold it ; yet I am compelled to avow, that amongst the ranks in which I serve, there are hundreds, nay, thousands of abler and more experienced men than myself, whose claims would of course be listened to before mine ; so I am placed in this respect a little in the position of a minnow amongst the whales, instead of the more attractive relation of a whale among the minnows. My private loss, however, is my country's gain, and I can rejoice with the Spartan of old, 'That Britannia possesses so many sons more worthy of her honour than I.' For although it may be a great advantage to the candidates for place, to have as few competitors as possible of any calibre, yet it is far best for the country at large, that the list of men fit for any office whatsoever should be well filled, and that there should be no need to search earth and sea to find a person to whom, without any very flagrant indecency, the post can be given. And therefore it is that I feel satisfaction and not vexation in the confession, that I have but a very faint chance of attaining distinction amongst *such* a body of men as those to whom I belong, and

that it is highly improbable that I shall ever be able to address you, like my noble antagonist, with the blushing honours of a government office thick upon me."

Here followed his political confession of faith, carefully drawn up, and revised by the counsels of Mr. Montgomery; and Augustus began to entertain the most sanguine hopes that the ferocious assault of the previous week would be passed over in silence, or at the worst, that Darcy was ignorant of his own share in encouraging the bitter feeling excited against him, when his premature self-gratulations were turned into horror by the concluding portion of his rival's address, which clearly enough indicated a very uncomfortable amount of knowledge of the whole of the little private arrangements of Yellow strategy.

"You have certainly given me a rather warm reception, my good friends," he said, in a jesting tone, "and one that I shall not very easily forget, although I have already forgiven it, for I can partially understand, and even enter into the feelings which excited your indignation against me. It was, perhaps, not in very good keeping with the manly character of which you make such professions in the north, and is hardly likely to raise your reputation for courage or fair play in the opinion of those who hear of it, to take odds of more than a thousand to one against your enemy, or to kick and stamp upon a man when he was down, who floored a decent number of you single-handed, till his horse fell with him, but I am sure that you are heartily ashamed of it now, and as I am going to settle amongst you, and be one of yourselves, I must hold my tongue about it for the honour of my county. Besides which, when I consider the calumnious manner in which my name has been connected with the grossest falsehoods, by persons whose duty it was to

teach you what is right, and not to instigate you to disgrace your national character; and when I remember that I have been actually preached against in the pulpit, and slandered in ministerial visitings; in a word, that no abuse, which commingled folly and malice could devise, has been spared to blacken my name, I can hardly wonder at your bad opinion of me, whatever I may think of the improper manner in which that hatred was shown. It has been very truly said, 'You may tell a man by the company he keeps;' by this kind of trial I am very willing to abide. I stand here as the friend of such men as the venerable and much-respected dean of your cathedral, of Mr. Montgomery, and Colonel Mainwaring, while my noble friend, Mr. Tomnoddy, rejoices in the support of two personages, whose speeches this day must have lowered them in the eyes of all right-minded men, more than any words of mine could have done, had I been willing to enter into a wordy recrimination, which I am not.

"As to the insinuations dropped by Mr. Sawdry, a gentleman whom I know perfectly well in another place, and whom I shall not expose at present, because I can put him to a more useful purpose, and the proper application of a beast of burthen is to get some work out of him, and not to unnecessarily ill-use or kill him. As to his insinuations, I repeat, that my friends intend putting to a tyrannous use any power they may possess over the poorer electors, through the loans, or advantageous leases they may have granted, I should not even have condescended to notice such a stupid libel upon a class, whose faults, whatever else they may be, certainly do not savour of a grasping, money-lending kind, nor of any unkindness towards those less well provided with this *world's gear*; had it not been for an idea which has

struck me, that I might as well show both him and you that I see clearly through his real motive in making the remark, viz., to let you know what any of you may expect, who dare to thwart his wishes, but are in any way indebted to him. I therefore beg to say, that if any one here present lies under the least fear of the kind, let him come to me, and prove himself an injured person, and I will speedily teach him a receipt for setting all that quite straight, and will undertake to perform upon Mr. Sawdry the same wholesome operation as St. Patrick wrought upon the reptiles of Ireland, viz., ‘Bring him unto a sense of his situation.’ And now, good-bye until to-morrow, when the polling begins at eight o’clock, and as I should like good strong fellows to chair me the day after, for fear of shaking my aching bones, perhaps such of you as feel inclined to assist in the ceremony had better go directly and be measured and weighed beforehand, that you may be chosen to carry me through the town. I dare say some of you are engaged to Mr. Tomnoddy, but as he won’t be elected that will not interfere with me. So be in good time.”

So saying, he waved his hat with a good-humoured bow to the crowd, and refreshed himself with a comfortable stare at the rage-empurpled face of Mr. Sawdry, who afraid to take up the gauntlet thus thrown down, for sundry valid reasons of his own of which we shall hear more presently, was boiling over with the anger and apprehension raised by this unmistakeable attack upon the honesty of his private dealings.

The show of hands was taken, and pronounced to be in favour of Mr. Tomnoddy, although a very forest of them was also uplifted to answer the appeal made in Darcy’s behalf; after which, a poll was demanded

by Mr. Montgomery, and the next day being appointed for holding it, the proceedings ended with a vote of thanks to the Mayor, and three times three for Her Most Gracious Majesty, not only as Queen of England, but the head of the ladies.

CHAPTER XXIII.

A SUDDEN BLOW DECAPITATES THE JONQUIL.

THE polling commenced with great punctuality at eight o'clock, and proceeded for about an hour with considerable vigour, though without any particular interest, as all the votes recorded during that time were those of perfectly well-known partizans of either side, whose answer to the question "for whom do you vote?" was as well known before they spoke as after the clerks had entered it in their books. At the end of this time Darcy was nineteen a-head of his opponent; but this excited no apprehension on the part of the Yellow committee, inasmuch as they knew that he had only polled, a little earlier, votes that must in any case have been given against them beyond all hope before the day was out, and they looked with triumphant anticipation to a body of friends who had promised Mr. Partridge to rush to the rescue at nine o'clock, and by an exhibition of united strength carry Mr. Tomnoddy to the head of the poll at one stroke.

Nine o'clock arrived, and a compact body of voters, preceded by a huge yellow flag, was seen approaching the polling booth, of sufficient numbers to justify the boast of Mr. Sawdry, that the Blues would very soon find the tables turned upon them now; when Mr. Partridge, with a neglect of the golden rule "to let well alone," which was a great disgrace to his shrewdness, suddenly conceived the notable scheme of casting a most deliberate insult on the probity of the enemy, by demanding that the bribery oath should be admi-

nistered to one or two of them "just to vex them!" and of all the people in the town to select for such a purpose, his choice fell upon Colonel Mainwaring! "I'll have a shy at that pompous old fellow," said he to Mr. Tomnoddy, "he'll be as savage as a thrice-drawn badger! 'twill be a rare joke to see him swallow it."

Augustus Tomnoddy, and several of the members of the committee, endeavoured to interpose, and begged him not to be so rash, but it was too late: supported by Messrs. Sawdry and McKenzie, who in their thirst to humble the proud old colonel forgot all prudence and consideration of consequences, he was firm in his determination; besides which, the party in question had overheard the request, and himself agreed to it; so sworn he was, and strange to say, instead of being at all savage he laughed most merrily, and Darcy, to his shame, evinced a similar indifference to the insult thus heaped upon his kind old friend. But after having recorded his own vote, and experienced the gratification of confirming its legality by oath, the Colonel was seized with a philanthropic desire of imparting to others the same pleasure as he himself had received in thus solemnly testifying to the purity of his electoral motives, and consequently requested that a similar oath should be administered to certain of the forty free and independent gentlemen nowadvancing to carry all before them under the Yellow banner of purity of election.

Now we have the high authority of the Belgian allies of that incompetent and ignorant Iron Duke, whom nothing could have saved from destruction but the indomitable valour of the said Belgians, and the lucky fact that his men had forgotten how to run away, and spent the whole day in vainly attempting to remember, until their final essay ended in the gross *blunder of rushing* straight forward into the very

teeth of the foe from whom they so ardently desired to escape ; we have this excellent authority, I repeat, for saying, that there are some dangers which one ought not to face, and the braving of which is an infallible proof of a very unmilitary turn of mind, and this appeared to be very much the opinion of the forty—thieves I was very nearly writing, from mere association of ideas, but I mean enlightened and independent champions of liberal advancement. They hesitated, and began to push one another forward with great modesty, uttering such sentiments as these—

“ You take it first, Jem ! there’s a good fellow ! rabbit it, it can’t hurt you, and you’re well paid for it,” or “ I wonder whether we shall be jugged, if they catch us ; but here goes for a try ;” as somebody pluckier than his neighbour thrust himself forward and swallowing the oath, recorded his vote for Muster Tomnoddy. But one man, who having twice made a bolt of it, and twice been rallied to the charge by the mock-jewelled hands of an energetic lawyer in the Yellow interest, now found himself not only taken by his “ spiritual leg ” (to copy Mr. Drummond’s finest of all extant metaphors) but also fairly on the slaughter-pen, whence there was no escape, summoned up courage to make one last appeal for mercy, and to suggest for himself a mode of escape from the penalties of perjury. He had been almost persuaded that now he had come he must vote, or be punished for contempt of court (a brilliant fiction of his legal persecutor, which, deserving a better fate as he did, eventually came back with a tremendous bang on his own head), and driven by that necessity which is proverbially the mother of invention he thus addressed the gentlemen upon the hustings—

“ Please will you tell me if it is perjury to be bribed by one side, and then vote for the other.”

Peals of laughter ensued among the Blues, and

prodigious disorder among the Yellows, amidst which the voice of the lawyer, yelling "Get away with you, you fool! and don't vote at all if you had rather not," was distinctly audible.

Hodge, however, replied to the appeal by Marryat's "freemason's sign," and putting his right thumb up to his nose, suddenly shot out the other nine digits like an expanded fan, with a thrilling effect which redoubled the merriment; after which he calmly recorded his vote for "Squire Darcy," and went away.

The rest of the redoubtable forty, finding a damp thrown upon their proceedings by the unwarrantable act of tyranny on the part of the Colonel, retired in a body to consult over their future proceedings, and the polling came almost to a standstill for a while from pure confusion; only five votes being recorded for nearly an hour, and all those in favour of Darcy, who at twelve o'clock had increased his majority from nineteen to twenty-seven, despite of the temporary diminution of his superiority at nine.

Precisely at noon, another Yellow caravan arrived, and not being sworn this time, succeeded in discharging such a volley of votes as to send their candidate to the head of the poll by two, a declaration of which alteration of the aspect of affairs was received by the zealous partizans of the Jonquil with prodigious applause. But their joy was destined to be of very brief duration, for about one o'clock a large brimstone-coloured placard was issued, announcing the "Resignation of Mr. Tomnoddy," and that gentleman appeared on the hustings, accompanied by General Everton and several of his principal friends, and making a signal that he had something to say, proceeded in a doleful voice to address the assembled people.

He informed them that taking into consideration the *bad blood which must necessarily be engendered in their*

borough by a contest carried out with such uncompromising violence by the supporters of his opponent, and fraught with such danger that the cruellest oppression would be practised on his adherents, were he to persevere in the struggle, he had made up his mind to sacrifice himself to the general welfare of the city, and by resigning his pretensions to the honour of representing them, arrest the evils which now impended. He was about to enter into further details of his devotion to his fellow-townsmen, when he was violently thrust aside, and old General Everton took his place, and thus commenced the only speech he was ever known to make.

"Inhabitants of Midhampton! I have come before you now to tell you a thing which it grieves me as much to be compelled to say, as it can do you to hear it. Augustus Tomnoddy is my own sister's son, as most of you here present probably know, and it is only natural that I should wish to shield him from shame and dishonour. But he actually refuses to be so protected, and of his own accord tears away the veil which Mr. Darcy's kindness extended over his treachery. He attributes his resignation to his unwillingness to expose his friends to the persecutions of the rival party, and indirectly supports Mr. Sawdry's insinuation that the Blue committee have resorted to oppressive measures to secure the votes of men secretly hostile to them. Now, all this is so far from being true that the real cause of this sudden termination of the contest must be looked for in the detection of his own acts of bribery and intimidation. To give you an adequate idea of how thoroughly he is in the hands of the enemy, I need only say that the person calling himself Jacob Partridge was a spy from the Blue camp, and that all his transactions have been minutely detailed to Colonel Mainwaring!"

Here a universal groan of horror burst from the banded forty, while several Blues whistled, "Oh dear!

what can the matter be?" in a most lively and inspiring manner.

"You may imagine," continued the General, "how painful it is to me to make such a confession; but bare justice to Mr. Darcy demands it, and it shall never be said of me that I refused to right an injured man at any personal sacrifice. I therefore publicly declare my honest conviction, that in electing the gentleman who must now be returned as a matter of course, you have obtained as your representative a man of the highest honour and integrity, and one well fitted to do you credit in his future career."

Having thus delivered himself of his only speech, he seized Darcy by the hand with a most friendly grasp, and worked off his superfluous excitement by the most vehement greeting which his still stalwart arm could accomplish.

The formal resignation of the government candidate put an end to the necessity of bringing up more voters; and long before the legal hour for closing the poll had arrived, the proceedings were over, the hustings deserted, and our merry friend was saluted by his supporters as Member for Midhampton.



CHAPTER XXIV.

"WHEN GREEK MEETS GREEK, THEN COMES THE TUG
OF WAR."

WE must now retrace our steps a little, in order to arrive at the causes which led to the sudden and violent overthrow of the hopes of the Honourable Augustus, as recorded in our last chapter.

The reader will perhaps remember, that an appointment was made by that astute young nobleman with a certain Jacob Partridge, in whose electioneering talents he had chosen to repose great confidence, and to whom he had entrusted the secrets of those strategetical manœuvrings which might best conduce to ensuring his election; and as the identity of that mythological personage with Jem Farren, poacher, dog-stealer, and negotiator of small loans to needy Cantabs has been fully divulged in the course of our narrative, little wonder will be expressed at this alliance proving an indifferent one to the Tomnoddy party. But we must trace the working of this fatal political partnership rather more distinctly than merely to allude to its inevitably injurious effect upon Augustus; not only to be better able to appreciate the qualities of that worthy, but also to disabuse every mind of any lingering spark of compassion for his defeat, or of the slightest suspicion that Darcy himself, in his contest against dishonesty, was not in his own conduct free from unworthy expedients. And I hope to be able to show, that although a trap cleverly set for the Yellow-hammer did undeniably entice that bird to its destruc-

tion, through its avaricious longings for a bait most judiciously adapted to its natural instincts by the cunning Jem, yet that Philip Darcy neither laid the snare, nor even knew in what manner it had been laid, until the feathered fowl was already hopping round it on his little lean legs, with outstretched neck, and eyes blinking with anticipative delight, wagging his tail with self-admiring approval of the knowing way in which he was going to steal the tempting morsel. For sure enough it was that, long before Phil knew anything whatsoever of the underhand proceedings of his antagonist, the latter had so completely compromised himself to work blackguardism, as to render the permitting him to take the consequences of his own propensities to evil, and to hang himself with the well-twisted rope he had industriously sate up day and night to contrive for his own neck, a deed of mere humanity towards the honest portion of the community, and by no means a doing evil that good might come of it; far less, instigating a fellow-creature to sin, and then punishing him for the fruits of our own advice. And an incomprehensible thing it is to my effete understanding, that it should be such a much finer thing in the eyes of so many men to be a rogue, a hypocrite, and one huge walking imposition, than a sensible, practical, well-educated man; and that having the latter character positively in their possession, and in numberless instances having nothing to do but to keep up the good standing they already have, they nevertheless cast away everything, and become the Pariahs of society, for the sake of attaining the evil reputation of being great scamps.

Now, there was Augustus Tomnoddy, born with a silver spoon, bedizened with an Earl's coronet, and the family bearings of a winged donkey soaring to the stars, well and truly within his toothless gums, the

borough of Midhampton as safe a seat for him in Parliament as that wonderful baby-chair is in the nursery, with more than half England beseeching to be allowed to honour and respect him, and a certainty of succeeding in due time to an inheritance in the Yellow Canaan of office, since he belongs by birth to one of the privileged families, with the extra recommendation of running little risk of being eclipsed by his companions, who mostly stick to dulness, as school-boys in classes sometimes do to idleness, by a mutual agreement never to exert themselves to learn, and so take a shabby advantage of the others.

And upon my honour, I do honestly think that this forms no mean part of the advantage of taking the Jonquil for your colour rather than the Violet, that you are not expected either to know or do anything; and that however miserably you fail, your friends will merely shrug up their shoulders, and quoting of you, as Peter Pindar's razor-seller did of his wares, "Upon my soul, I never thought that they would shave!" calmly support you with all their might, to give you a fair chance of making another good blunder, at which they smile most complacently and say, "I thought so! I declare I did! wasn't that a jolly mistake for a statesman to make," and vote for you with as much alacrity as ever; and so wags on the world of wise and prudent England, that paradise of impartial and practical (?) appreciation of talent. Whereas, if you are Blue, you have nothing but botheration all the days of your life; for in the first place you have not only something to keep up, but the black dragon's own trouble to make your poor little farthing rushlight be seen amongst the brighter luminaries of your party, and instead of making allowances for your little weaknesses, they turn you out for a muff, and fill up your place, and try to get

work out of you in a most disgusting manner ; and, secondly, you see that people do expect you to "shave," though they are so lenient to your adversaries ; and woe be to you, if your edge be found unfit to hew stone or chop down trees, nay, cut a slice out of the cream-cheese of which the moon is popularly presumed to be composed, if called on to do so. For if an honourable member arises in his place, and begs to know what protection her Majesty's ministers have afforded against the contingency of the sky falling, and whether in case of any danger of its doing so, the government have fixed upon the spots most eligible for driving in posts to hold it up, and you can make no satisfactory reply, then be sure that "you have gone and done it," as little boys express it, and that all Yellow land will howl with dismay at your negligence, and divers old ladies of both sexes will exclaim, "All is lost ! all is lost ! carry us out and bury us decently !" and out of office go the poor Blues to well-merited contempt. But, behold ! when the canaries are again in full song, being fed to the full with Treasury seed, and comfortably housed in the gilt cages of Downing Street, the self-same question arises, and a minister, first peeping into an old exercise-book, in which he has kept his thumb during the debate, to refresh his memory at the last moment as to his brilliant impromptu, arises in his place, and grandiloquently announces, "If the sky fall, larks will be caught ; and if the capture of these valuable birds should equal our expectations, there will, doubtless, be an increased export trade to Spitzbergen, Timbuctoo, and Terra del Fuego, and according to the last estimates, and taking into consideration the effect upon freights, I think, &c., &c." Loud cheers follow as a matter of course, and the poor Blues, yawning *with weariness*, and internally grumbling with hunger,

but not wasting their breath in ineffectual groans, have to consider themselves answered.

But to return to Augustus. Is it not extraordinary that he could not be contented to "take the goods the gods provide him," and be elected quietly and decently into Parliament, by a constituency sincerely and honestly favourable to his father's house, as long as it behaved at all respectably to them, and lead the straightforward, honourable life, which opened such a wide field for a laudable ambition to a young man of his prospects? but must needs mix himself up in all sorts of disreputable cliques and intrigues, to win by stratagem and chicanery what no one would have grudged him, had he sought it in a different way, and all this at the risk and, as it turned out, at the cost of exposure and disgrace, so as to force even the staunchest friends of the poor old Earl to feel ashamed of their champion, and the bulk of the really well-disposed clients of the Hall to cry with Tom Moore—

"We're willing to worship, but only entreat
That you'll send us some decenter Godheads than these are."

For there stands Philip Darcy, in a chair decorated with laurels and blue ribbons, carried in triumph through the streets of the borough he has successfully contested, raised on a sudden to a wondrous height of popularity, and as certain of re-election at the next dissolution, as of his dinner at the appointed hour, returned to Parliament by the agency of one man alone, and that one his rival Augustus. No very savoury subject for meditation, one would imagine, for the maiden placeman, but every whit as true as disagreeable, and made none the pleasanter by the knowledge that it was no great secret to his party at large, *that such was the case.* And lest any vestige of

pity should remain in the mind of the reader, to whom this vague and general allusion to his trickery and its detection may have conveyed an impression rather of weakness than wickedness, and disposed him to look on the contemptible little reptile as being almost as much sinned against as sinning, I will now enter more fully into the minuter details of his tactics, and quickly scatter to the four winds all misplaced sympathy with his well merited ill-fortune.

It would appear that Robert Farren, the publican, whose house of entertainment had been recommended to Darcy in such glowing terms of admiration by his brother Jem, in the opening pages of this history, was a gentleman of singularly unprejudiced and impartial views on the subject of politics, and although perfectly willing to turn his inn into a very nest of Blue corruption, only to be equalled, and not even then to be surpassed, by a mouldy Stilton cheese, and, indeed, would have painted it inside and out as azure as the sky, for a trifling percentage on the cost of doing it, yet that no longer ago than the very last election, the sovereigns themselves, which flowed in a placid stream into his pockets from the Trimmington agents, were not more yellow than all his thoughts, words, and works; and he had obtained from Augustus and all his clique the reputation of being "a very sound man," which, being translated into the vulgar tongue, means a man who for an evil day's wages would do a very evil day's work. So it came to pass, that when he had disposed of the good-will of his house to his brother by private contract, in a somewhat novel, though extremely literal sense or reading of that expression, he was by no means readily suspected of having done so, but was quietly permitted to sound the poorer voters after the fashion of a woodpecker, *viz.*, to institute vigorous investigations into which of

them were rotten at the core, his noble patron taking for granted that he was in his interest all the while, especially as he heard nothing more of his proceedings than simply that he was continuing to be hand and glove with all those truly independent voters, who had no scruples or principles of their own to fetter their perfect freedom of action during the ensuing contest. And just as Bob was making up his mind for an open secession to the enemy, and preparing to confide, like a second Clearchus, to his mercenary soldiers their real destination in the present campaign, he received a telegraphic message from fieldmarshal Jem, to "Hold hard," and on the following morning learnt in an epistle from that worthy, that he "was on another lay now, and that the game at present was to help Mr. Tomfool" (he meant Mr. Tomnoddy) "to bribe first, and to blow on him afterwards."

So following orders, for he had a profound belief in his brother's generalship, he confided to Augustus his knowledge "of a gent, who was as tidy a hand at managing an owdacious, countumalicious set, like them fellows in the lower town, as any in the whole country," and so paved the way for the favourable reception of a letter from Jem, signed Jacob Partidge, which had been carefully written, according to instructions, by a sizar of St. Agnes, who owed the said Jem nine shillings for "lively rats." For it is a fact which ought to be known, if it is not, that whereas most people will offer any reward in reason to get rid of those Hanoverian immigrants, a great many Cantabs desire them beyond barbaric gold, and would have regarded Bishop Hatto's plague of rats as the learned Sir Joseph Banks did that of flies (according to the unimpeachable evidence of Peter Pindar, whose veracity as a chronicler is beyond suspicion, when we remember the ennobling tendency of his tirades

against majesty) viz., as a positive blessing, wasted on an ungrateful monster, stone-blind to his true interests. The success of this letter is already known, through the answer returned to it, which we heard read in Charles Burton's rooms at St. Barnabas, and we now come to the meeting between these two professors of the great science of humbug, in which, however, there was this fearful inequality between the contending parties, that the one was a very shallow fellow pretending to be very deep, and the other, a man as deep as the Atlantic, shamming to be shallow—and a greater disparity, or more dangerous, no one need wish to his very bitterest enemy.

The interview was opened by "the galinaceous bird which carries on its breast the horse-shoe badge," and to all appearance a stupider partridge never was seized in a dog's mouth from being too terrified to fly; for it did not take the clever Augustus five minutes to discover that his new acquaintance was an ass in himself, but a magnificent tool, being simply desirous of doing as he was told, without at all comprehending the merciless advantage which was being taken of him every moment. He required no guarantee for his expenses, but would trust entirely to Mr. Tomnoddy's generosity and sense of honour, for which Augustus very justly thought him a tremendous fool; he would not take any money unless he got the votes; he made some most indiscreet confessions of his former election practices, and altogether completely satisfied his patron "that he was a very good sort of fellow, and a very staunch, hard-working servant, but not clever. No! certainly not clever by any means." So when their little arrangements were being committed to paper, at the request of Mr. Partridge, merely to refresh the memories of the contracting parties, and the sums *allotted to each voter* were being duly appended to

their names in a list, of which each was to keep a copy in duplicate, Augustus had no more fear of his silly dupe turning round upon him, than a butcher has of being assaulted in the rear and slain by a house-fed lamb, if he were to turn his back for a moment to look for a knife. And when he was begged to sign his name to Mr. Partridge's tariff, in return for that gentleman's signature to his, he was perfectly contented with the reason assigned by his confederate for this proceeding.

"You see, sir," said the Partridge, "that if we are not very careful indeed, we might be playing at cross-purposes and offering different sums or uttering different threats to the same person, and that would never do; I mean, if I were to go to such a man as Will Creeply and offer him three or four pounds, whereas you only meant to give him two, because we are pretty safe of him already, we should only be raising the market on ourselves, and putting them up to asking more, and that would be a very bad job. Or if I go to old Mosely, the grocer, and don't know exactly what tale to pitch about that appointment for his son, I shall very likely get you into some mess there; so the best plan is for you just to look over my list, and sign it if you approve of it, and I shall sign a copy and give it to you, and so we shall be sure of telling the same story, besides which the committee will know that it is all right."

The upshot of which arrangement was, that Mr. Partridge walked off with a price-current of the Mid-hampton constituency in his pocket, which had been duly attested by one of the candidates, and, with a little addition at the top, for which Jem had left abundance of room, was as pretty a document as you need wish to see in a day's march. It ran as follows:—

“ Having entered into an agreement with James Farren, for the securing of certain votes for the borough of Midhampton, over which his brother exercises some control.” (Here the postscript, which in a very Irish manner stood first, though a veritable postscript nevertheless, having been written last, came to an end, and the note submitted to Augustus Tomnoddy began.) “ I think the following very fair terms for the men concerned, and will not pay a farthing more, under any circumstances :

William Creeply, Fighting-cock Lane .	£2	0	0
Joseph Sneaker, Barebones Acre .	1	0	0

(This man is an old servant at the Hall, and only wants a remembrance) &c., &c.

“ Signed,

“ AUGUSTUS TOMNODDY.”

Well, indeed, might Jem have boasted of his success, had this been all, but he was far too arrant a poacher in heart, and in genuine taste, to be contented with setting only one snare for his prey. So he contrived also to get possession of a kind of brief, giving full instructions for the management of Mr. Mosely, and containing such plain conditions under which he might, or might not, treat with him for his interest, as to leave no shadow of doubt on the mind of any reader, that the promise of a place under government for the child of figs and raisins, was entirely dependant upon the loyal behaviour of Mosely *père*, in the ensuing election. And this, moreover, to crown his success, he had obtained by the use of a little legerdemain, in officiously handing Augustus a bit of paper to jot it down on, upon the clean side of a government envelope, directed at full length to the new *official*, and sealed with the well known arms of a

certain secretary of state. The unsuspecting lordling, who saw the paper come out of the breast-pocket of the Partridge as plainly as he could see the coat itself whence it was produced, and consequently was rather impressed by the Arcadian simplicity of the arrangements of his ally, than alarmed by the promptitude evinced in obtaining the document, readily complied with his request "to put it down all fair, so that there should be no jawing about it, when young 'Eight to the pound' came to claim his promotion," and put his other leg into the trap, with a self-complacent smile that was delightful to behold.

"You can tell old Mosely," wrote Augustus, "that I am quite willing to pledge myself to obtain his son a place worth at least eighty pounds a year to begin with, on condition that he spares no influence of his over both his family and those who owe him money, to insure my election. But it must be an understood thing, that if he refuses or delays to put the law in force against such of his debtors as may vote against me, or decline to vote for me, my promise in behalf of his son is utterly null and void. You may tell him plainly, that as I will strain every nerve to reward my friends, so I have nothing to give to lukewarm supporters, who send me idle excuses, or pretences of silly scruples, instead of the practical assistance I alone require of them."

One really might have imagined that he was now noosed enough for any one, but not so thought Jem, upon mature consideration, for as he very shrewdly remarked to his brother Robert, as he smoked the calumet of fraternal council with him that evening at the Horse and Jockey, "to try to bring home a charge of bribery before a committee of gentlemen, most of whom had got in much the same way themselves, and a good lot of whom would be as yellow as

buttercups into the bargain, was rather too much like asking a parcel of gamekeepers if it was really true that they did a little poaching on their own hook every now and then, which every fool knows would be flatly denied, as they would never be such Jemmy-loonies as to tell of each other, and so put a stopper on their own snug trade. So Robin, my bird of Paradise," concluded he, "we must collar young Simple Simon in some other way, as will make his governor, and that old uncle with the white smellers, so downright jolly well ashamed of his goings on, that they'll scratch him off the card to save his being shown up. And I think I know a way to tackle it, too. I'm a mufti—that's an old cock in Turkey, of some sort—Mr. Darcy has a picture of one in his rooms, with a beard like a billy-goat, and I fancy he was the parson of the parish where the Squire was playing hide and seek with them Austrians—if I don't make him write a letter in Mr. Darcy's name to Billy Williamson, threatening to distrain on him for his rent, unless he has something better to say for himself than he had last quarter, and then gammon the nice young man into going down and paying the money for him next day, so as to get his vote out of him for gratitude."

"That will never do, Jem," answered Bob, evolving a huge column of smoke, "he's not such a sneak as that, nor such a fool either, I think."

"Ain't he though," retorted Jem. "If that's all you know about it, you won't make your fortune by reading people's characters. He's mean enough to cheat a workhouse boy out of his breakfast, and fool enough to..... have been gammoned as he has been. I needn't say a deal more, Master Bob."

"Perhaps not," replied his brother, shaking the ashes from his pipe, and after eyeing a glass of rum and water with a severe countenance against the gas

lamp for about a minute, as if demanding of it some sufficient explanation of its behaviour as to colour or odour, he drank it down at one draught, and performed a kind of solemn dance upon the floor, an infallible sign with him that he was contented with the present state of affairs, after which feat of agility he betook himself to his guests in his tap-room, and left the cunning Jem to the maturing of his plans.



CHAPTER XXV.

THE FOX IS MISTAKEN FOR A "DULL DOG."

THE next morning, Mr. Partridge proceeded to put his plan into execution, and although he met with some little objection to its adoption in the outset of his conference, he finally succeeded to his heart's content, in a manner which would seem incredible from the very inconsistency of such confidence reposed by one treacherous rascal in another, did not every-day experience teach us that few things are more common than this blind belief in the promises of secrecy made by men whose avowed conduct at the time of making them abundantly proves how unfit they are to be trusted even in matters of very trivial importance.

In answer to the faint expostulations of Augustus, not against the dishonourable nature of the proceeding (for about that his lofty soul wrapped in high theories for the amelioration of society cared nothing), but against the risk attending it, the scheming Partridge asserted that nothing could be easier than for himself to be present when the letter arrived, and to get it into his own hands, so as, under colour of showing it to the Earl and enlisting his compassionate bounty in his behalf, to get it back again into safe keeping, and contrive to lose it.

"He'll never see it again, sir," said Jem, with great truth, "for when I have once laid my fingers on it I shall hold it pretty tight." And, to do him *justice*, he did. "Besides which," he continued,

"there is no necessity for your handwriting to appear, for I'll get some one else to copy it out, if you will tell me what to say ; and although it would perhaps have been rather safer to keep it all to ourselves, yet I dare say I can find a man whom we could trust if I were to try."

Now a bright idea flashed across the mind of Augustus of a somewhat similar nature to the hallucinations of certain chess players, amongst whom I proudly record myself, who invent the most brilliant mates, which have but one drawback, viz., that you are mated yourself before you can carry them out, owing to the unpleasant fact that the piece which was to do such terrific execution if guarded happens not to be, and so perishes ingloriously, instead of marching on to victory, or some little error of the kind ; and near akin to this was the splendid device of our dear Augustus to keep a check on the Partridge, if needs be, through the very dodge by which he was eventually entrapped himself ; no uncommon termination of attempting to sup soup out of a short spoon with the Prince of Air.

"Don't you think it would be better for you to write it yourself?" asked he.

"Certainly, my lord, if you wish it," said the obsequious game-bird ; "only prompt me what to say, that's all."

And into the letter he plunged forthwith.

"What a good hand the fellow writes," thought Augustus, "I was afraid that it would be impossible to send his scrawl ; but as it is, there is no difficulty about the matter, and I can prove that he wrote it and not I, if he were to attempt to mutiny—not that he will, but it is as well to be safe."

So he cheered on his ally with all his might, until the latter threw down his pen and announced the

work completed, with a face of the utmost complacency at his performance. But when poor Augustus reviewed the letter, behold! it was all misspelt in a most atrocious manner, and utterly impossible to be palmed off as Darcy's, it being a well-known fact that however badly a poor man spells himself it is far from safe to presume too much in his not catching you out in your incorrect orthography; besides which, supposing Williamson were to show it after all to the parson, or some educated person, perhaps to the Earl, to ask his assistance! So he carefully corrected the mistakes, and set his tool to work again, but with little better success, for no less than five fair copies did Jem spoil, including one which the ill-starred Augustus spelt letter by letter, without managing to instruct his humble ally even then. At last, in an evil hour, he gave way to the request of his amanuensis to write it out for him in a good big hand, and allow him to copy it out at his leisure; and left him in his study, while he rode down to little Potter's-field to call upon Mr. McKenzie, busily engaged on his copy, and industriously humming to himself—a r ar, r e a r s rears, arrears, &c., as though steadily bent on making a better job of it this time. As soon as Augustus was gone, however, he thrust the foul copy into his pocket, and hastily dashed off a letter directed to "Philip Darcy, Esq., St. Barnabas Coll., Cambridge—(if out to be opened by Mr. Burton)," and returning to the Horse and Jockey, changed his clothes, took off his wig and grizzled whiskers, and appearing in his usual costume in which we first made his acquaintance, started off to the Manor House, with an olive-coloured kitten in his pocket, and a humble request to see Miss Montgomery upon his lips.

But as his was not the first embassy to which that

young lady had given audience this morning, and the preceding was also of an indirectly political nature, and not altogether unconnected with the destinies of our hero, we will leave Jem Farren for a time, to trudge merrily upon his way to put a finishing stroke to the business which he has in hand, and give our attention first to the visitor who had left so immediately before he arrived as to cross him in the yard on his way to the gate.

"Could I have a word or two with Miss Montgomery, my girl?" said a neatly-dressed, fresh-looking young man, who bore the marks of his calling as a mariner in his whole appearance, and in whom the reader will presently recognise Stephen Trueman, to the merry Kathleen who happened to be returning from an errand in the village precisely at the time when the sailor made his appearance at the Manor. "I should be very much obliged, if she could see me, for I have something to tell her which is not meant for any other person's ears; so I should be sorry to have my journey for my pains, since I have come a good long way on purpose to speak to her."

The little bower-maiden was very favourably impressed by the tidy appearance, and frank, honest face of the visitor, and replied with great civility that she did not think Miss Montgomery usually admitted people without knowing their business, but if he would send his name and errand into her, perhaps she might be willing to grant him an interview after all.

"Tell the lady," said the tar, in a tone of some asperity, "that I am a sailor from the north country, and that I have not come to beg, or to ask any favour; what I have got to say is nothing to my own advantage, but what she will thank me quite as much for telling her as ever I shall do her for listening, as it is far more her own concern than mine."

"Well, upon my word, Mr. Salt-water Jack," retorted Kathleen, in great indignation, "you have a pretty way of sending a message to a young lady. I shall deliver no such impertinence as that you may depend upon it."

And she moved away as if determined to have nothing to do with such a savage, but casting back, nevertheless, very placable glances at the free-spoken son of Neptune. Stephen saw his blunder and hastened to amend it without delay.

"I beg your pardon," said he, doffing his hat with much politeness, "but I did not mean to be rude to you, or to your lady either; I was only a little bit vexed that you seemed to think I had come to beg, or something of that sort. Now do see if you can get me a word with your young lady, for I am quite certain that she won't be at all angry at my coming, when she hears what I have to say. Or if you can't help me there, can you tell me where Mr. Darcy, the Blue candidate, lives—not that he will do a quarter as well."

"I'll go and tell Miss Montgomery this very moment, sir," replied Kathleen, whom the mention of Darcy's name had suddenly turned into a perfect goddess of hospitality, "and if you will just step into the hall here, and take a bit of luncheon and a bottle of ale, to amuse you while I am gone, I will undertake to show you in to Miss Florence in less than half an hour, or at any rate directly that Miss Leila is gone, and she never stops long of a morning."

"Is that the Colonel's daughter down there?" asked Stephen.

Kathleen nodded.

"She's a good sort," said the sailor, approvingly; "she's a brave, canny little lassie that! but I don't *know that* I want her to hear my errand though, for

I can't help suspecting that she isn't much like your namesake in the song."

"What song?" asked Kathleen, "and why isn't Miss Leila like her?"

"Why, my beauty," responded Stephen, who was already commencing his attack upon the luncheon, like a prudent man conscious of the value of time, "there was a little girl whom I knew up at Sunderland, who used to sing about a lassie named Kathleen, who was so uncommonly silent that her lover complained that she hadn't a word to say for herself when he got up before it was light to say good-bye to her; and I hear folks say that this is not Miss Mainwaring's fault at all, so I think on the whole that if you have no objection I will wait until she is gone."

After which he relapsed into silence, and busied himself in uncorking the beer which his new friend had produced, without taking the slightest notice of the other servants, who had collected in the hall to stare at Kathleen's guest, who was being treated by that coquettish damsel with such honour. In a few minutes the girl returned, and announcing that Miss Mainwaring had gone into the conservatory, ushered Stephen into the drawing-room, where he found the lady he sought seated in an easy chair, and awaiting in some curiosity an explanation of the present unexpected visit.

"I humbly beg pardon, Miss Montgomery, for intruding," said he, with a natural courtesy of manner, which spoke well for the respectability of his early training, "but I have something in my head which I should like to do, and in which I fancy you may be both able and willing to assist me. You must know that I am well acquainted with the movements of those ruffians who attacked Mr. Darcy upon the moor a day or two ago, and that I am extremely anxious to

do everything that lies in my power to prevent such things for the future. Now, I am not a Blue, miss, I don't pretend to say that I am—I belong to the people, and think they have their rights as well as others. I don't deny that there are a great many men whom I would rather see in parliament than Mr. Darcy; so a week ago I was red hot for Mr. Tomnoddy, not that I liked such an arrant fool better than an honourable, brave young gentleman, but on the same principle as that which makes a sailor wish the enemy a bad captain rather than a good one. I thought it would be easier to wring from the Yellows the power we desire than from the Blues, who, to do them justice, are not easily frightened, so I came down here to do the squire's cause all the harm I could; but I have rather changed my mind, for I don't like to witness these disgraceful scenes, and think that they lower the cause of the people, and give an excuse for keeping us down. So I have a plan in my head for keeping order on the nomination day, and I take the liberty of coming to you to tell you what it is."

"I think you had better have gone to papa or to Colonel Mainwaring," said Florence; "they understand all about the election, which I do not."

"Not so, if I may be so bold as to contradict you," returned Stephen; "if they meddled, it would immediately be turned into intimidation, or corruptly influencing electors, or something of that kind; whereas if you think that Mr. Darcy and his friends would not object to pay a little expense for a service of the sort in a friendly way, I would rather speak to you about it, and see if we could not manage it all quite snugly between ourselves."

"I really do not see how I can help you," repeated Florence; "at least what can I do, except merely *deliver a message* for you to my father; and if this

be all where is the advantage of sending it through me, instead of communicating with him in person? I still think you had better see him."

"I have already given you one reason of mine, miss," answered the sailor, modestly firm to his original opinion, "and I am quite certain that treating with any of the gentlemen of the Blue committee would be misrepresented as hiring a mob to disturb the election, and only create a disturbance, instead of preventing it. But I will now give you another of my reasons, and that, I hope, will please you better. I have told you before that I am no Blue, and am as far as Mr. Tomnoddy himself from wishing to make myself the servant of that party; I only want to preserve order, and I candidly own to you that my principal object in making the election go off quietly, is to save the credit of the very class of people whom your father wishes to depress; I do not pretend to say that I should not be just as well pleased, and better, too, if I were called upon in defence of the law to put down a Blue mob instead of a Yellow; how then can I go to these gentlemen and, offering them such assistance as this, expect them to listen to me? Now perhaps you may be glad to secure the safety of Mr. Darcy, at least so I am told, and will not trouble your head about the motives of those who keep the peace. I beg your pardon, if I offend you," he continued, seeing a crimson flush not altogether unmingled with displeasure spread over the features of the lady he addressed, at this rather open opinion as to her personal interest in the matter, "but I am a plain man, and said what I thought. You ladies don't like to hear things mentioned, I believe, about which we rough fellows are accustomed to talk freely enough; so be so good as to make excuses for this part of my rude breeding, the same as for my hard hands or

coarse coat. But can you, and will you undertake that I shall be able to redeem my word, if I promise a good body of my fellow-sailors their bare travelling expenses to your town and back, and a bit of dinner while they are here? I don't think that is selling their services very dear, and I could not even ask a man to come many a good long mile at his own expense for such a thing, nor do I call it more than bare civility to them to give them a bite and sup (as we say northward) before they go home. But not a farthing over and above that do I ask, or would take any more from you, if you were to offer it. Is that a pretty fair bargain, lady, or not?"

"Perfectly so," replied Florence, "and one that I think there can be no objection to accepting; but I had better know something about the amount of the expenses, since it would appear that it is to be an entirely private affair, concerning nobody but Mr. Darcy himself, and not to be brought before the committee at all. Well, I will promise faithfully to give him your message, and meanwhile I think I can answer for the thing being done."

Stephen laughed rather merrily, though without any disrespectful familiarity of manner, as he made answer, that he did not imagine that such a young man as Mr. Darcy evidently was, would care to pay men to defend him from being pelted, and indeed that to make any personal appeal to him, would only deter him from taking proper steps to secure the safety of his voters, but ended by saying that he would leave everything to the lady, and that if she guaranteed the expenses the thing was done. "I came to deal with you, miss," said he, "and I humbly wait for your decision."

The estimate he gave Florence for the services of a *hundred and fifty* steady respectable seamen, who

would undertake to preserve order with the very strictest neutrality and want of favour to either party, was so moderate and so evidently precluded all possibility of her having been made the dupe of a designing man, knowing as she did, that such assistance was by no means unneeded, that she made no hesitation about it as it stood, and gave her promise that the money should be forthcoming on the morning of the nomination. Stephen then took his leave, after declining almost rudely the magnificent present with which she desired to reward his own proffered services, and returned with Kathleen to the servants' hall, where he made an universal conquest of the assembled maidens with his dry fun and droll stories, and, strange to say, even appeased the jealousy of the men by his good-humoured merriment. After having been royally entertained at the servants' dinner, at which, despite of his little trifling with Kathleen's provender an hour before, he managed to acquit himself with great credit, he was escorted to the gate by a troop of his new friends, and as I before remarked, crossed Mr. Partridge on the road, who to Kathleen's great amazement, propounded to her precisely the same question as the departing visitor had done, viz., "Could I have a word with Miss Montgomery?"

Producing the kitten from his pocket, and announcing with the most imperturbable composure that he had been instructed by the young lady at the Priory to bring it to Miss Montgomery, as a present from her, and to be sure to see it safely in the hands of the lady herself, he managed to obtain admission, but finding Leila in the room when he was ushered in, and consequently being compelled to drop his little fiction rather sooner than he originally intended, he came out of his trenches with his accustomed coolness,

and proclaimed the artifice to which he had resorted, in these terms :—

“ I have made so bold, miss, as to bring you a little kitten, of a very curious sort, quite a little jewel I may say, as a present ; and I told the girl outside that it had come from Miss Mainwaring, along of a reason of my own ; for thinks I to myself, ‘ if I don’t give her something to say, she’ll be a-wondering what I have to do with bringing the little thing here.’ ”

“ And pray why have you brought it ? ” demanded Florence, rather haughtily, “ for I am quite as much at a loss to understand your errand as my maid could have been ; and why do you presume to tell untruths to the servants to obtain admittance. I do not wish to buy any kittens, and even if I did, I expect people who have anything to sell to send me a proper message about it.”

Jem was not a whit abashed or discomposed by this rebuke, but stroking the head of the kitten with great apparent fondness, replied that he had brought it as a present, and not to sell, and that he only wanted to give Miss Montgomery a little information about the election, and to tell her that Mr. Darcy was quite certain of getting in now, for that he himself had managed Mr. Tomnoddy’s business for him in pretty style.

“ And do you take me for the chairman of Mr. Darcy’s Committee, or his confidential election-agent,” replied Florence, coldly, “ that you come here, under false pretences, to tell me the success of your schemes ? You appear to me a particularly impertinent man, and I should strongly advise you to take yourself out of the room without more annoyance, before I ring the bell, and.....”

“ *Have me turned out, I suppose, miss !* ” said Jem, *demurely* concluding the sentence for her. “ Well ! I

am sure I am very sorry to have offended you, and I didn't mean to do it; but Mr. Darcy first employed me to manage some of his election affairs for him, and then counter-ordered what he had said—and I have been working for him like a Turk, nevertheless, and have won him his seat, and this is what I get for it! Now I don't call it pretty!—I don't indeed! But good morning, miss, and I humbly beg your pardon for intruding."

Vexed as poor Florence naturally was, she could not refrain from laughing at Jem's disgust at her ingratitude; and feeling perhaps that to aggravate such a person was not exactly the best way to prevent the inconvenient consequences of Kathleen's mistake in admitting him at all, she answered his appeal with a considerable increase of good humour, and simply repeating that he had been guilty of some rudeness in thus thrusting his presence upon her by a false pretext, but that she was willing to accept his apology, upon the supposition that he had been induced to act as he did by the knowledge of the deep interest both ladies felt in the triumph of the Blue cause, inquired in what way Mr. Darcy's election was secured, and by what means he flattered himself that he had attained so desirable an end.

No one knew better than Jem Farren the profound wisdom of building a golden bridge for a flying enemy; and finding Florence so much more placable than he had ventured to hope, he dropped any further allusion to the inauspicious commencement of his visit, and related to the two damsels, at full length, the details of his scheme for ensnaring Mr. Tomnoddy, and its great success.

"And now, miss," said he, "comes the part in this here melancholy tragedy, as I call it, in which I want you to play the part of first lady. It would help us

very much indeed if you would go down, as if by accident, to Billy Williamson's house, and be there at the time that the forged letter arrives, and then, if you please, you must be sure to get hold of it, and let the man know that you don't believe Mr. Darcy wrote it, and say you insist on keeping it until it is all cleared up, and get a tremendous row kicked up about it."

"But I don't know Mr. Darcy's handwriting well enough for that," said Florence; "how should I?—and what business have I to be meddling with his letters, and insisting on having mysteries cleared up? I never even saw him till about a fortnight ago. You must be mistaking me for some one else, my good man; at any rate I cannot stir in the matter, I assure you."

"Just so, miss," returned Jim, in a kind of soothing voice, as if he were pacifying a child, which set Leila off into an immoderate peal of laughter, and caused even Florence considerable trouble to preserve the gravity necessary to keep this intolerably impudent vagabond in any order, "I'm afraid that I've made a mistake altogether. In fact, as I told the Dean of St. Barnabas only a week ago, I never do have half my wits about me."

"'Whose dog is that?' says he; dogs are not allowed in college, you know, miss."

"'What dog, sir?' says I, 'I never saw any dog.'"

"'No!' says he, 'you didn't? a little more, and you'd have fallen right over it.'"

"'Your reverence,' says I, taking off my hat—for civility to the dons up at Cambridge is like stale pastry, it costs very little and goes a very long way—'when I'm in college, I never see anything, and I never hear anything, and I never know anything!' And I don't neither; I'm sure now that I made a *mistake*."

So with a tremendous duck, which was meant for his best bow, he proceeded to quit the room, but was arrested at the door by the voice of Florence calling after him.

"You have left your kitten behind. Take it with you."

"It couldn't be done at any price, miss," said Jem, solemnly; "when I make a present, I make it!" and he stalked majestically forth into the hall.

Leila bounced up out of her chair, and ran after him with the kitten in her arms, and reached him just as he was letting himself out of the front door. She wanted to restore him his property, but he would not hear of such a thing.

"No, thank you, missie," he said, "the kitten is meant for Miss Montgomery there, and I can't take it back. I know all about it well enough. But bless my soul! isn't she close about Mr. Darcy? I never tell anything, though, so she needn't have been so shy about him. It's all right, mind you, about young Tomnoddy—he's as dead a bird as ever swung in a gamebag. Only you mustn't forget to go and get that letter from Billy Williamson, and then carry it off to old General Everton—he's a much safer card than the Earl."

"I'll go myself," said Leila, "and I know Mr. Darcy's handwriting quite well, but I don't suppose Florence knows it from yours. Don't you sell dogs, by the by?"

"I should rather say I did, miss, and right good ones too," answered Jem.

"Have you a very great beauty just now? I should like a Blenheim best, or if you cannot recommend one of them, a very small Skye-terrier."

"I have the handsomest King Charles in all England, miss," said Jem, proudly, "his head is hardly big

enough to hold his eyes, and his hair is as soft as yours."

"Very well! Mr. Darcy shall buy him for me, so don't sell him. Good-bye."

"Good-bye, miss," returned Jem, cheerfully, "and thank you kindly for coming to speak to me a little more civilly than Miss Montgomery. You shall have the dog, if the Great Mogul were to come down to Willow Walk to bid for him, you shall indeed. My word," soliloquized he, as he walked off, "but that's an uncommon pretty girl that Mr. Darcy's so spooney upon! and none the worse for having some spirit, and plenty of sense too, I'll be bound; but, upon my life, if I'd my pick, I almost think I'd have that little one after all. There isn't a nicer King Charles in all my lot than she is! and I don't know whether that Skye-terrier that I cribbed from the duchess is any handsomer—I don't indeed. I am glad she's to have the dog, for it vexes me to sell a fine little Blenheim, to be carried about by some painted Jezabel or other, that has gammoned a boy young enough to be her son into wasting his money upon her. And yet if it were not for nonsense of that sort we should lose a good lot of the very best business that we do.

"Hurrah for my thousand pounds, which I have honestly earned, and without spending half as much on getting it as I expected! What a sweet little public I'll set up! Bob shan't come the cove of property, with a stake in the country, any longer. So now for dropping this letter for Billy Williamson into the post, and giving old Mosely a hint of what to expect, unless he will screw down the people who owe him anything for shop-goods to vote for young Tomnoddy, and the thing is done! For they'll never get rid of such evidence as I can bring against them, *if they were to try till doomsday*; besides that pretty

little sham letter, which my lord's friends will never dare to provoke Mr. Darcy into publishing before the world. No, no ! I have him safe now ! ”

It is needless to recapitulate all the details of circumstances well known to the reader, as far as their eventual bearing on Darcy's conduct, viz., how that Phil wrote to Mr. Montgomery to decline standing, which letter was delivered to that gentleman the same morning as Jem's visit, though its contents were not made known to the young ladies until after the departure of their new ally ; and how both he and the Colonel were disgusted beyond measure with this intelligence, excepting indeed, that they ventured to hope that he might even yet reverse his decision ; to earnestly exhort him to which, the Colonel wrote him a letter of commingled ferocity and good-will, of a most characteristic nature—which never reached him, however, until after the nomination was over, when, in company with the above-mentioned epistle from the redoubtable Jem, it arrived under cover from Charles Burton ; and how the communications of Leila and Florence effected the object in which their fathers had failed, and restored Phil's thirst for senatorial honours. All this, I repeat, is perfectly well known to my reader, so I will confine myself in the ensuing chapter to the development of Mr. Partridge's plot, and the recording in terms of due honour the triumphant success with which his efforts to entrap the Honourable Augustus were eventually crowned.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE PRIVATEER HOISTS THE BLUE FLAG, AND FIRES HER
BROADSIDE.

THE next day happened to be Sunday, and Mr. Mosely—(having attended church in the morning, with six well-washed, chubby-faced children, and a lean, sickly-looking son—who was no other than the expectant pensioner on the bounty of the newly-appointed official—and having attentively listened to a most moving discourse from Mr. McKenzie upon the subject of extirpating the unrighteous from the land, without your hand sparing, or your eye pitying them, in which were interwoven sundry unmistakeably broad hints as to the duty of his congregation during the impending election)—was seated at his early dinner, enjoying the creature-comforts of a fillet of veal and Meux's porter, before a roaring fire, when a ring at the private door of his premises announced the entrance of a serpent into his Eden; and taking no notice of the servant's reply that Mr. Mosely was at table, and could not admit visitors, much less condescending to be repelled by it, the bustling Mr. Partridge forced his way into the parlour, and threw himself upon the prim little sofa with an air of mysterious importance. A dismal presentiment of coming evil trickled coldly down the back of the ill-fated grocer, and the delicious morsel of "brown" on his plate, the appropriation of which to his own whole and sole benefit was the one petty selfishness of a most unselfish man, grew as uninteresting and tasteless to him as the very flabbiest,

and most mashed rag-like portion of that detestable joint ; nor could even a creaming tankard of mighty stout restore his fainting soul, as he dolorously inquired "to what blessed fortune he owed the honour of a visit from so distinguished a person as the factotum of Mr. Augustus."

To this Mr. Partridge made answer that "he should be glad of a word or two with him when the children were gone, but that he would rather wait till dinner was quite over, and they could be perfectly alone ;" at the same time rather more than hinting that a bottle of port and a pipe would make no such bad accompaniments to the colloquy ; an expression of which desire was soon converted into a law, and the meal being concluded, "they straight were brought at his command ;" and the door having been carefully closed upon the chubby-faced scions of the house of Mosely, the business of the day was entered into by Mr. Partridge.

"I am terribly afraid, Mr. Mosely," said he, "that my young lord is not very well pleased with your behaviour about this election ; you appear to him extremely lukewarm, considering all that he has promised to do for your son ; and I tell you as a friend, that if you don't bestir yourself a deal more than you have done, you'll find he can forget them that forget him."

"Why, my goodness gracious !" quoth the poor grocer, in amazement, "what more would my kind patron, the Earl, want of me ? I'm going to vote for Mr. Tomnoddy, and so is Muggins my son-in-law, and the young baker that comes courting my niece Betsy ; and I've been canvassing for him every day, and I blow his trumpet to every one who comes into my shop. Why, Mr. Partridge, I'm called Yellow Jack all over the town ! it's quite a joke against me, ever since Captain Starboard gave me that name."

because I was so redhot against old Sir Magnus. Mr. Augustus will be complaining of the crows for being so white, I should think. You must be joking, though."

"I'm as grave as a mustard-pot, and a deal graver than any judge I've ever seen yet, and I've a large acquaintance amongst them, too," replied Mr. Partridge. "Mr. Tomnoddy is very vexed with you, and serve you right! Do you know that John Manning is down in the Blue canvass-book as a sure vote, and his youngest child has tied a blue rag round her kitten's neck, and has the impudence to walk with it in her arms right past Mr. Augustus, without even trying to hide it? and then you call yourself a decent and grateful man!"

"But John always was a determined Blue," answered Mosely, "he is head ploughman to Mr. Montgomery, and his eldest daughter Polly is Miss Florence's infant school-mistress, and all his children love that dear good young lady as if she were a sort of angel, which indeed I believe she is; for there is no one hereabouts fit to hold a candle to her, in kindness and generosity, for all of her being a bit proud of her high birth: and as far as that goes, I think of her, as them Romans did of a fellow they called 'the furious miller,' because he licked the Frenchmen, that were called Gauls in those days, out of the city. You see I know something of polite learning, Mr. Partridge, for Betsy reads to us a bit most nights, when she's at home. And I remember this very well—'And Rome can bear the pride of him, of whom herself is proud.' So if them Romans, with all their idolatrous Popish errors, had gratitude enough in them for that, wouldn't it be a crying shame for us Christians not to love that excellent lady, for all her gentleness to the poor, and her anxiety to have every child around her well taught, *not in them ridiculous gimcrack things that they teach*

at the National School in the town, but how to fear God and get an honest living. Therefore, I say that John is quite right to vote for her father's man, and to declare that he would put his head in the fire, if it would do her any good."

"Very well," said the Partridge, with a stress on the superlative of profound meaning. "So you're beginning to sympathize with the 'accursed seed,' as that godly man Mr. McKenzie said in his discourse this morning. Now don't John owe you two pound-ten for shop-goods? I ask you that."

The grocer assented.

"And you're not going to put him into the County Court if he don't pay you by twelve o'clock to-morrow morning at the very latest?"

"No, I am not," said the grocer, stoutly, "don't you think it! I persuaded John myself to lay out his money on what I thought would be a nice little bargain for him, and I promised of my own accord to take so much a month from him, till he had paid my bill; and he's a very honest fellow, and would not have run up an account he couldn't pay for the world; why, he doesn't exactly owe me anything at all till the beginning of the month, and even then only a few shillings, for that was the bargain."

"There is no such bargain in law," said the Partridge, "besides which, even if there were, you never put it upon paper, so that is no answer to my question. Will you haul him up in the County Court, or will you not?"

"Bother the law!" said the irreverent Mosely, "the law either is, or ought to be, to check rogues, and not to teach men to cheat each other under shabby pretences. And as for putting it down on paper, that's nothing to do with the matter; my word is a deuced deal better than my hand-writing: I write like a

spider crawling out of an inkstand over the paper, but my word, thank Heaven ! will be taken in a minute by anybody in the whole town."

"Then you may take my word for it in return, Mr. Mosely, that you will get yourself into trouble with Mr. Tomnoddy, for he has set his heart on obtaining this very vote, and upon your managing it for him too."

"I don't believe it," replied the other, "I don't for a minute ! I wouldn't believe that Mr. Augustus would stoop to such a shabby trick, if you were to repeat it to me till you were hoarse. It's all a dodge of your own, I am convinced."

"Read this for yourself, then, my good fellow," answered Partridge, "and don't be so handy another time in abusing people to their faces. I suppose you know my young lord's hand, or if you don't you can easily find it out, whether it is written by him or not." And he placed the brief he had received from Mr. Tomnoddy in the hands of the bewildered grocer, whose eyes seemed starting out of his head as he perused its contents. "Now what do you think of that, Mr. Mosely, and of the way in which you have just been speaking of the instructions which I have received from my noble employer?"

"I think this," was the firm reply, as Mosely concluded his scrutiny, buttoned up his pockets, pulled out his shirt-frill, drummed on his snuff-box, and evinced in divers manners a kind of nervous pluck, indicative of a steady determination to stand at bay, "I think Mr. Tomnoddy is a great scamp, and I wouldn't vote for such a mean-spirited, tyrannous vagabond, though the Blues got a lease of ninety-nine years, renewable at pleasure, by my refusing. Mr. Darcy is young and inexperienced, but he'll mend of that, and, *at any rate*, he is an open-hearted, manly fellow ; but

such a sneak as that other chap will never get any better. So you may tell him, with my compliments, that old Mosely, as he is pleased to call me in that precious letter, is too honest a man to ruin a poor innocent creature for being faithful to his kind friends, even though he was weak enough, as a father, to be willing to put up with some things of which he didn't quite approve, to advance his son ; and you may tell him too—but it's no use jawing about it, especially to you, who seem one of the same sort—so tell him in plain words, that I'll see him d—d first, and that if he hauls me up before his father for the oath, I ain't so poor as to mind about the fine."

So saying, he opened the door for his visitor, who ejaculating with more sincere approbation than Mosely by any means credited, "Well done, old boy ! you'll fight as long as you have two teeth left to catch the badger with, I see," walked off in high glee at the success of his negotiations so far.

I think we have now lingered long enough upon the details of the villanous intrigues of Augustus Tomnoddy, and the counterplots of Mr. Partridge ; suffice it to say, that Leila, finding from one of Williamson's weeping children, that a letter had been received bearing the signature of Mr. Darcy, threatening to turn him out of doors unless his rent were immediately paid, and that he was going up to the Castle to see the Earl that very afternoon, abruptly quitted the Sunday-school, where she had received this information in explanation of the stifled whimperings of her pupil, and gaining possession of the epistle bore it off to the Colonel, prefacing the startling intelligence of Mr. Tomnoddy's forgery of Phil's name by this oracular figure of speech, "The trap's down, another fool's caught !" a favourite

expression of her aunt Dossy on the occasion of a wedding amongst the villagers.

"You should have told me of this before," said her father, gravely.

"No indeed," replied Leila, saucily, "you would have hushed it all up, for the honour of the family, or the aristocracy, or something of the sort, and I was determined to let things take their course. He was very impertinent to me and Floss besides; but now I am pretty straight with him." With which Christian sentiment of forgiveness the damsel of the raven locks made her *congé*, and returned to the consistent occupation of teaching the duty towards our neighbour.

A cabinet council of the Blue committee was hastily summoned, and it was agreed that the exposure of Augustus should be delayed until after the election had commenced in real earnest, for reasons which will quickly appear, and Billy Williamson was given to understand that his letter, though a forgery, was merely a silly practical joke, and having received Colonel Mainwaring's plighted word that he should receive no damage whatever for disregarding the threatening missive, was bidden to hold his tongue upon the matter altogether; which he readily agreed to do, remarking, with true north-country shrewdness, that the subject of his being behind-hand with his rent was not one upon which he cared to talk over-much.

The mine was eventually sprung about an hour after the panic-stricken flight of the Yellow army, produced by the administration of the bribery oath, at which conjunction Mr. Partridge threw off the mask, and disclosed to the Earl and General Everton the true position of Augustus.

"Why delay this fearful information so long?"

asked the miserable father, "why put it off until my son is actually in nomination, and pledged to stand his election? Had you told me only yesterday morning, he could have been quietly withdrawn, and his credit saved. This is very cruelly done."

"We had no alternative, my lord," replied Colonel Mainwaring; "had we informed you of this before the nomination, it is to be feared that your interest might have raised up another candidate, and that would not have suited us; and had we divulged our secret earlier this morning, Mr. Partridge's attack upon me could not have been made, by which we have put the corrupt practices of your son's committee past all doubt."

"Could you not have trusted to my honour?" asked the Earl, "or if not, had you not precisely the same check on me in one case as in the other?"

"In your own personal honour indeed we might repose implicit confidence, my lord," replied Mainwaring; "but who will answer for that of your son's committee? pardon me, if I decline trusting to Messrs. Sawdry and McKenzie. I grieve most deeply for you, but there was no help for it. I remember, when I was in Canada, there was a very clever joke against their neighbours in the United States, that the stocks made of veritable wood and iron were the only good American securities, and my opinion of the gentlemen I have mentioned is very much the same. As to possessing the same check upon your nominee as upon your son himself, it is one thing to exact of a treacherous schemer the just penalty of his fault, and another to work on a father's feelings to attain a purely political end."

It was arranged, therefore, that Augustus should retire at twelve o'clock, and that the whole affair should be hushed up, when that most infatuated young

fool, taking courage from the leniency of his accusers, showed such symptoms of declining after all to keep his word, and to brazen it out, as to necessitate stronger measures, which ended, as we have seen, in his being compelled to resign, and in the maiden speech before mentioned of General Everton, who vehemently insisted upon his casting no slur upon his opponent, in the terms in which he announced his retirement from the contest.

And thus ended the memorable struggle between the Violet and the Jonquil.



CHAPTER XXVII.

THE MOUSE PUTS ITS SHOULDER STURDILY TO THE WHEEL,
AND MOVES THE WAGGON.

"I HAVE a little project in my head, Philip," said Menie Burton, a few days after the election, to the honourable member for Midhampton—who had at last coaxed her out of the formal "Mr. Darcy" into the more familiar Christian name, though nothing could induce her to follow Leila's bad example, and be disrespectful enough to call him Phil—"and I want your opinion upon it. I dare say you will think it very silly and presumptuous of me to dream of such a thing, but I have been weighing it in my mind a good deal, and I should like to carry it out very much."

"Well, Maid Marion," responded Darcy, cheerfully, "what is your scheme? Nothing to do with setting up a greenwood kingdom at this bitter time of year, I hope, since Friar Tuck himself would prefer a warm fireside for his venison pasty and canary, I should imagine, to all the delights of Sherwood Forest, with the ice an inch thick upon the roads. But what is this notable project of yours that has been fermenting so long in that mass of dark hair, which you dignify by the name of a head?"

"Don't laugh at me, if you please," said Menie, timidly, "until I have finished; for I know that it is very conceited of me to think of it, but it would give me such great pleasure to put it into execution. You know that now Charlie is second wrangler, and almost

certain to be that other thing—I forget what they call it—and is perfectly safe of his fellowship, that he wishes to go into orders, and take mamma and me to live with him, and devote himself entirely to us; but this seems such a great pity that it makes me quite unhappy. Now, Mr. Montgomery, who takes a great interest in Charles, seems to believe that he is quite capable of becoming a great lawyer, and perhaps be a judge, or some distinguished person; so I want him to read for that, and let us go on as we do now, instead of entirely sacrificing himself to us; thereforeI should like to help in working for dear mamma, too,” burst out Menie, with a spasmodic effort of courage to bring forth her cherished folly, and letting Phil know the worst, as she seemed to think; “I should like to be an artist, and paint pictures, to buy mamma a nice house and everything comfortable about her, and it would be such a charming thing to feel, when I saw her quite happy, that I had earned it for her. Now, I will tell you all my poor little plan, and see what you think of it. I know my sketches will sell for something, because I gave two to Mary Cunningham, and I caught her out in changing them away at the repository for a work-box, which was extremely mean of her, but proved that there were people who would give something for them; and I thought that if I could get some little payment, however small, for my scratchy things now, I perhaps might be able to take lessons of a good master, and so by degrees I could become a painter, and make money for mamma. I am afraid that you will think me very conceited, Philip, for what I am going to say,” continued she, with pretty enthusiasm, “but I am sure it is in me!—I mean the real love of art, that could paint for the true devotion to it, without which no one, as I am told, *will ever attain* to eminence. But I feel as if it were

my natural sphere, and that in cultivating my taste, I am only following a bent given me for good purposes by Him who wills us all to succeed in moderation, if we will only be earnest and honest-hearted in our endeavours."

Darcy was much struck by so grave and practical a remark from such a mere child, and by no part of it more than by its singular freedom from the set conventional phraseology, in which almost all religious sentiments are couched when coming from lips so young and inexperienced.

"Your mother has taught you very sound ideas of religion it would appear, little Menie!" he replied gravely, "and perhaps talents such as you speak of are not intended to be wasted in disuse. But it is a rare thing indeed to hear such very solid arguments from a merry little fairy like you, and well does your mamma deserve the comfort of such a son as Charlie, and such a dutiful daughter as yourself, when she has taken such pains with your training."

"Oh dear me!" quoth Menie, laughing, "you must not pay me such fine compliments upon being good, or religious either, for I am sorry to be obliged to confess that I am considered by Mr. McKenzie a very black sheep indeed, and that he has complained more than once to mamma of my disinclination to join his evening classes and societies, about which I understand nothing, except that they meet to praise one another, and abuse the rest of the world; not that I am any stupider in that respect than the bulk of children of my age, I dare say; but there is not a scrap of gravity in me, and I fear never will be."

"Perhaps other people would give me a more favourable opinion of you, little woman," suggested Phil, kindly, "and I have no doubt that if I were to inquire more into the matter, I should find that you

had given a very unfair description of yourself. So I shall reserve my judgment till I know you better."

"You must not go to Floss either," resumed Menie, archly, "for she is out of all patience with me for being so idle over a catechism of the heresies of the first four centuries which she is teaching me, and for never being able to comprehend the difference of doctrinal opinion between sundry people whom she pronounces to have been diametrically opposed to each other, but who appear to me to have said exactly the same thing in different words. Besides which, I am convicted of not caring a bit whether a church stands to a hair's breadth in the proper direction, relative to the rising of the sun on the anniversary of its dedication, to compute which both Florence and Leila have the funniest little instruments possible, to say nothing of my indifference to ecclesiastical architecture and sculpture, unless indeed it is handsome, which in her opinion has nothing to do with the question; but my worst offence of all I believe is, that I hold in very artistic contempt some of her favourite pictures, in which the Saints have their heads on one side, and their arms crossed in a most wonderful manner on their chests, while their feet resemble very ill-made battledores, if you are baby enough to know what they are. You have no idea, Philip, how commonplace and unromantic I am in many of these things, and yet I try hard to like them to please dear Floss, and I really am fond of my church, and not a bit of a dissenter in disguise; but I shall never be any good, except to carry baskets to old women, ask after their rheumatisms, read to them, and so on, in fact, perform all the lowest work that any goose is fit for."

Here Menie diverged into an apologetic defence of her *detestation* of the battledore-footed Saints, and *fair-haired* Madonnas, clad in silver and blue, like Trinity

fellow-commoners, which led back the conversation into its original channel, her devoted love of art, and desire to become a painter.

“ You can help me very materially, if you will,” said she, in answer to his inquiry of how he could render her any assistance in her darling scheme ; “ in fact, you can give me the very start which I require, and without any trouble on your own part. I have found out a place where sketches of any romantic and rather uncommon scenes and costumes are readily bought up at a price which would be abundantly great enough for me, although not so high as to induce first-rate artists to supply them : so if you will lend me your portfolio of landscapes and groups in Transylvania and the Banat, I can easily work them up into drawings that will command quite as good a sale as I require at present ; and as I improve I shall be the better able to support myself and carry out my scheme. Leila shall tell me some of the wild stories she learnt from Marcellus Aurantius, who seems by her account to be a kind of civilized ‘ Last of the Mohicans,’ and I shall illustrate them, and become painter in ordinary to Mr. Glossop.”

“ It is very amiable of you, Menie,” replied Phil, “ to be so anxious to assist your mother, instead of being any encumbrance to her, and I will cheerfully lend you what you require, and give you a few hints about your groups besides, if on further consideration I approve of your plan ; but let me have a day or two to think it over, and see whether anything better can be done to help you. Meanwhile do not tell any one of your intention, and make no inquiries about its feasibility. I will undertake the whole management of it, if necessary ; and you need have no fear that I will causelessly discourage so honourable an intention. By the by, we have never presented the valiant

bantam with his new medal, and I fear that he must be infecting the other cocks with a discontented spirit, owing to the ungracious delay of his government to grant the reward which they have so long promised. But I hope he will now consider his decoration, if somewhat long delayed, proportioned to his merits, for I have selected the prettiest coin of the present day for my token of admiration." And he produced from his waistcoat pocket a new Austrian ducat, the beauty of which Menie readily admitted had not been overrated by him, though she strenuously objected to such a costly medal for her pet.

As they walked home from the Hall, where the above-mentioned conversation took place, an excellent mode of reconciling Menie's wishes with his own inclination on the subject occurred to the musing Phil, the expediency of which was considerably heightened by a letter he received from his mother that very evening; and to delay my reader no longer on this subject, he next day announced to Menie, that a foreign friend of his particularly desired to have water-colour sketches of some of his favourite pictures at the Hall, and that it had occurred to him that she might have the job of copying them if she chose. His friend was very rich, he informed her, and so could pay very well indeed, considering the kind of thing required (a proviso which he inserted to obviate Menie's conscientious scruples about employing her instead of a superior artist), and the whole affair might be kept quite snug. Moreover, she was not to tell any one that she was painting for money, especially mamma, in order to give her a good surprise when our little artist's fame was established; and as for the suspicious circumstance of having an excellent master for the future, that was easily arranged, by her taking *lessons at the same time with Leila, who obeyed Phil's*

instructions with all the docility of a well-broken pointer; while, with regard to his payments, our hero proposed with all due gravity to settle with him in person, and stop it out of Menie's profits, to which she most artlessly agreed. How cruelly she was cheated by so doing, I leave those persons to imagine, who, like Mr. Tomnoddy, conceive talent and over-reaching in matters of business, to be inseparable qualities. So the agreement was made for £4 3s. 6d. a copy, which minute reckoning was the result of Phil's imaginary computation of expenses, and invented for the express purpose of giving an air of reality to the transaction; and this sum she was to receive, over and above her paints, pencils, and drawing materials of every kind, together with Mr. Boothby's lessons twice a week. And Menie departed in great glee at the prospect of affording assistance to her beloved mother; while Darcy also was tolerably well contented with a scheme which enabled him to provide the means of cultivating the talents of his little favourite, and adding, perhaps, some little comforts to the scanty means of his friend's mother, without wounding the feelings or lowering the self-respect of either. Nor was his anxiety to achieve both objects by any means misplaced, as the following extract from Mrs. Darcy's letter will abundantly show, in which it was to be perceived with very disagreeable distinctness, that if he desired to preserve poor Menie from being very cavalierly treated, it was imperatively necessary to scrupulously conceal any little favours which he might be disposed to lavish upon her.

"I do not approve very highly of this Midhampton scheme of yours," ran the maternal epistle, "more especially your fancy for entering Parliament. It is very expensive, and no earthly use to you or your friends; and although I never object to your spend-

ing your money as you choose, within the bounds of moderation, yet I cannot help saying that I think it is rather selfish of you to forget me and Julia in this extraordinary manner. I suppose you will be having farmers and all kinds of queer people calling upon you at all hours, besides deputations from the members of the trades in your borough ; and I could not think of admitting them into my house, that is settled once for all. I remember years ago that some most extraordinary creatures came from Manchester to see your poor uncle, when he was secretary for something or other, I forget what (I mean my own brother, not that old Bengal tiger that was always plaguing your father about my money matters), and they were quite insolent when I sent them word that they had better sit down in the servants' hall and have some beer, until we had finished luncheon ; and strange to say, he was very angry too, and said I ought to have let him know, instead of taking upon myself to deliver messages for him. And you see, Philip, I could not put up with such things in my own house, or be set down by my son. Yet to keep up two town houses, besides Monkworth and Midhampton Hall, would be an extremely expensive thing, especially as I live in England only about five months in the year. I am older than you—not much, it is true, but enough to give advice, and it would not do at all. Besides which, I shall want all the money I can scrape together this year, for I mean to go to Florence, and marry Julia to the Prince di Capello ; but his terms are most exorbitant. I am told upon excellent authority, that nothing less than eighty thousand pounds on the wedding day will do, and Alderman Pigwiggin has bid sixty already.

“I like the idea of having that child you speak of a great deal better, for I think we might make her very

useful, particularly abroad, where regular ladies' maids give themselves such ridiculous airs, so you can send her to me as soon as you like. I see no necessity to wait until I come down to Midhampton, for she will learn my ways much better in town, besides being taught all the newest modes of dressing hair, and several other little things she had better know how to do before we leave England in the autumn.

“By the by, Julia will insist upon it that you mean her to visit us as an acquaintance, and to be her friend, and has made up her mind to be very fond of her, but I do not suspect you of being so silly as that, although you did want to marry a fortune-teller, or somebody of that sort, a year or two ago. She tells me also some foolish story about your falling in love with a Miss Montgomery, who, she declares, has made quite a conquest of you, but as you say nothing about it in your letter, I will suppose that she is mistaken. I remember our butcher was named Montgomery when we first married; if it is the same family, I should not mind so much, for I believe he has become extremely rich, and it would be a good match for you; for although we could not visit you any longer, as a matter of course, yet your mother would always be glad to see you at her town residence, or Monkworth either, provided that you don't bring your wife with you. But if she pretends to call herself a lady, and has any notion of being on an equality with me, I withhold my consent altogether, for you cannot marry while I am alive, without plunging us all into poverty, and though I love you as a mother should, I have a duty to pay myself.

“Pay Messrs. —, my bankers, two thousand pounds next week, or at the very latest, the week after, but the sooner the better, for they are getting quite troublesome about my account, which they say

is overdrawn, as if I could help that. You know I have no head for business, and I must say that I think it rather odd that you do not attend to my affairs a little more, and prevent these things from happening. I have discharged Owen for being impertinent, but he says that he is your man of business and not mine, so that I have no power to draw cheques upon him. You had better speak to him about it yourself, for I have been obliged to refer a gentleman to him, who is willing to advance Julia's dowry upon the Monkworth estate, and I really am afraid that Owen will render him no assistance. Do be careful of your money, for you spent so much last year, that I am quite in straitened circumstances."

This was a pretty cool effusion for a lady who had married without a farthing of her own, had managed to fool away all her husband's unentailed property in his life-time, with the exception of her settlement, had teased her son into giving her the full value of that the moment that he came of age, and ever since his accession to his uncle's fortune had engrossed the lion's share with the lion's usual gratitude, growling and showing her teeth at every one who came near the prey upon which she was regaling. But Phil, quick-sighted as he was in most affairs of life, was as blind as a bat to his mother's encroaching disposition; in fact, he made excuses for her, in season and out of season, for so long a time and with such pertinacity, that at last he began to believe them himself; and although it would be saying too much to affirm that he considered her a wise and high-minded woman, yet he honestly did think her merely worldly, weak, and hopelessly spoiled by fashionable society, and had no conception of the grasping nature and calculating *cunning* concealed under this affected ignorance of her *real position* as regards the disposal of the property.

Now, the plain truth was, that although Mrs. Darcy was far too great a fool to allow you to get anything out of her by appealing to her knowledge of business or common sense, she was not by any means silly enough to be incapable of extorting from you anything upon which she could lay her hands; and if you imagined that the utter impossibility of making her comprehend her obligation to bear her share of expenses, or to pay her losses at cards, was any criterion of her ignorance of her claim upon others, when the debt was the other way, you egregiously deceived yourself. And the good lady had discovered, that what yellow doctrines are in politics, and charity is in religion, the being too fine a lady to understand anything of business is in the great art of fleecing your wealthy son, viz., the virtue that covers the multitude of your frailties; and that by remaining profoundly ignorant of the independence attained by that son, on reaching his majority, to say nothing of the powers of his trustees before that period, it was possible with a good grace to express both wishes and expectations, which would require more impudence than even she possessed to urge, when once convicted of a proper knowledge of the relative position between mother and son, and the absolute control of the latter over the entire estates.

But as I have before remarked, Phil saw through none of this, but considered his mother a mere woman of fashion with no head for anything practical, and listened to all her grievances, and answered all her exorbitant demands for money with an unsuspecting good-will, which must necessarily confirm the impression given by his Blue politics to all sensible people, viz., that he was a great ass. Nor did even this last effusion produce any greater impression on him as regards the maternal visit to Midhampton, than

merely that she would not like it much, and so would very soon take her departure. For as to altering his plans, that never occurred to his mind, much of the imperturbable good temper of which proceeded from so sturdy a defiance of all opposition, that he did not excite himself about the bare fact of the disapproval, enough to feel anger at it. With regard to the indirect insult levelled at Florence he was very indignant, as a matter of course, but equally as a matter of course consoled himself with the reflection that no human being who had ever seen her would write in such a manner; besides which, it was no such novelty for his mother to make an exhibition of herself in a similar way, by some general excommunication of society at large, as to cause him to feel particularly disquieted by one more display of her absurdity. Nor did her expressed intention to mortgage Monkworth affect him a scrap more, for she had offered for sale, or mortgage, or lease, or security for a loan, or transaction of some kind, almost all his possessions already, and having once really obtained a sum of money from a fashionable bill discounter, lent her upon the expectation of Phil repaying it to avoid a scene (which, by the by, he did once, though he turned to bay when it was tried on again), she had periodically made a demonstration of the same kind, in hopes of finding another accommodating gentleman willing to deal upon the same terms.

For all this Phil cared but little, for although it would have given him pain to have realized in plain terms the fact that he was too used to despise the petty trickeries of his mother to notice them much either one way or other now, yet it was certainly the case, and he humoured her like a child or an idiot, *without so much as pretending to consult her opinion, or believe her stories.* But with all his indifference

to his personal share of the consequences of his mother's vagaries, he was not thoughtless enough to involve another in such a disagreeable state of things. so he made up his mind that all hopes of domesticating Menie at the Hall, and making her Julia's friend, were fruitless for the present, and that it would not be expedient during his mother's visit to exercise any of those little neighbourly kindnesses towards Mrs. Burton, which, if delicately managed, come so gracefully from the rich to their fellow-gentry in less affluent circumstances. But, on the other hand, he determined that he would take great pains to support the dignity of his friend's mother in every conceivable way, by the most elaborate courtesy and respect, and leave no opportunity for the petty sneers he dreaded to be founded on a single vestige of truth, caused by his supplying from the superfluities of his garden, &c., the many little luxuries he had hoped to be able to afford.

"Poor lady!" soliloquised he, apropos of this subject, "what a lot of game she will have to eat during the season. Thank heaven! you may always send that without offence, and grapes and pine-apples too. Certainly my mother is a very funny woman, and has lived with her eyes shut for a long time; but I think my foreign friend, who is so anxious for copies of my pictures will turn out a very useful member of society. And madame will very soon get tired of Midhampton, that's one comfort, for I should fancy that this is about as awkward a neighbourhood for the exhibition of airs of *ton* as any in her Majesty's dominions, and that she will speedily discover, I presume."

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